



No. CLXXVIII.]

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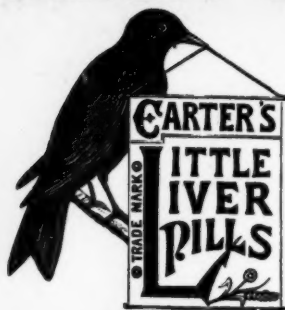
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the skirts of her clothing, for all the way as she went water had been spilt, and the dust had been displaced and washed up into little hills of mud.

Suddenly while she was picking her way among these she heard a quick rush of descending steps, and a woman ran down the bank from one of the cottages, put her arm hurriedly round 'Lisbeth, and urgently exclaimed :

'Have you been sent for?'

'No one has sent for me,' answered 'Lisbeth. 'What do you mean?'

'I mean if you've not been sent for, don't go!'

'But I must go. I want to see Hetty.'

'Oh, not yet! Don't go nigh hand her yet. Don't, I beg of you.'

But all the while she was speaking she felt 'Lisbeth trying to free herself.

'Stop, 'Lisbeth, stop. Listen to me. You and me we've always been good friends—stop when I ask you. Don't go where she is just yet! Let me beg of you to turn back, or come into my house for a bit. Do, honey; it will hurt you terrible if you go on! There'll be nothing done or ready, and they never look like themselves when they've been a few hours in the water!'

'What are you talking about? Who's been in the water? I don't understand one word of what you're saying!'

And yet 'Lisbeth was only trying to put aside the misery which in a moment she knew was coming on her.

'I thowt you knowed,' said the woman; 'I thowt you were bound for to see her! 'Las the day, what have I done? Oh, 'Lisbeth! 'Lisbeth!'

'Lisbeth, who was trembling all over, reeled, and would have fallen if her friend had not caught and made her sit down on the bank-side.

'Tell me all,' she said faintly. 'I shall have to know it in the end. Is it very bad? Tell me quickly—it's the kindest.'

'Your Hetty's been taken out of the water drowned. Folks reckons that she's putten hersel' away—drownded hersel', you know,' she added, seeing that to outward appearance 'Lisbeth did not understand her. 'She went to her bed last night as usual, they say, and she got up as usual, and gav' your father his breakfast, and either he took no very pertiklar notish of her, or else she was that much like what she always was, that there was nowt to tak' notish on, for he never got a gliff of nowt wrong wi' her neither in the way of trouble of mind or body, so when he'd had his

breakfast he just clicked up his dinner basin and set off to his darg (day's work), and niver knowed nowt about what had happened till he overtook the men bearing her home scarsh a quarter of an hour back. They'd got a shutter and laid her on't, with a sheet over her, and just as he was a wondering what could have been plashing down on the road all the way as he went, he cam' up wi' the bearers, and they tell't him they were bearing a woman's corp. He knowed it was a woman without their telling of him, for two bonnie braids o' hair were hinging down, and it was them and her clothes that were drip, drip, dripping down on the road all the way as they went; and——oh, good Lord above us! I don't believe you've heard better nor half that I've been telling you—you've sounded clean away!

'Lisbeth had fainted, and her friend was at last constrained to hold her peace.

Almost before daylight next morning George went to the place where Hetty's body had been found. 'Lisbeth and he had spent the preceding evening with old David, who seemed unable to say anything but 'If she hadn't taken her own life, I might have borne this!'

'But she didn't!' said George with absolute conviction. 'Why should she?'

'Yes, I might have borne it,' persisted David.

'But, father, why should she take her own life? No girl was ever light-hearteder than our Hetty.'

'She did take it, and both of you know it!'

'But what reason could she have? Had you and her had any words?'

'None but what was pleasant. She gav' me my breakfast this morning. It's like a year ago. She put my dinner in the basin and tied it up i' the handkercher, and gav' it to me, and then walked down the garden with me.'

'Did she say owt that was like a good-bye to you?'

'No. She looked at me as we went, but there was no trouble in her eyes that I seed, and nowt was said till I showed her the edging of the flower border and said, "Our 'Lisbeth spoilt the look o' that by letting the better part o' them primroses die for want o' a sup o' water nows and thens." "We'll soon set that to rights, father," she said, and that was all that was said, for I niver bad good-bye to her, nor she to me. She just stood by the gate, and I just went.'

'That shows I'm right,' cried George. 'If she'd meant to drown herself she'd ha' bad you some sort o' good-bye.'

'My bairns! my bairns! you'll not stop me having my own heavy thowts, and they're far away t' worst of what I have to bear. I'll niver get over the idee of a child o' mine having to put herself away through trouble. And all the nybors know she did it.'

'They'll find they're wrang,' George had said then, and now he was up betimes to do what would probably bring this about. Crossing the wet grass, he went to the bank above the dub (a deep pool)—a pretty bank, in summer decked with flowers, but now there were only some primroses. He took out an old knife, which he had surreptitiously brought away from Rose Cottage the night before, and with it he dug round the roots of a fine primrose plant growing just above the dub. When he had cut all round about its roots so that the plant could be easily lifted up, he left the knife sticking in the earth, concealing its handle beneath the leaves of the primrose, and that done, he made with his feet a little slide on the wet ground, as if some one who had been digging up the root had slipped into the water.

He was about to return home, hoping to creep back to 'Lisbeth's side so quietly that she would never know of his absence, when he saw that he had dropped his handkerchief by the primrose. 'That would have ruined everything,' he thought. 'I was meaning to get 'Lisbeth and her father and some of the nybours to come here with me, and then I would have pretended to hit my foot by accident against the knife, and then they would have seen that the primrose was half taken up with one of the Rose Cottage knives, and David would have remembered setting Hetty on to get primroses, and then I would have found the place where her foot slipped and shown it to them, and after that David and 'Lisbeth and everyone else would have got to know the truth, which is that Hetty fell into the water, for nothing would ever make me believe she drowned herself. I'd die for it that she didn't!'

So saying, he stooped to pick up his handkerchief, and, while doing so, saw beneath a whin bush a little bit of something white.

It was a letter which had blown there. It was addressed, 'To my dear father, sister, and George.' His heart stopped beating when he saw that the writing was Hetty's. Alas and alas! this, then, was the farewell which had never been uttered by word of mouth.

'Forgive me,' he read, 'for what I have done. I am sore afear'd that it will be a great shock to you, but indeed it's for the best. I could not have gone on as I have been doing both now since I came home and afore I went away. All's been acting when folks were by me, and misery when they were not. God above will forgive and pity me, I am sure of that, for He knows what I have endured. It has neither been my fault nor no one else's—it just had to be. 'Lisbeth was ill and she would put me in her place with George, and George was kind, and I never so happy as when with him. At first I saw no harm nor danger—no, not until my heart was that set on him that I was miserable when he was out of my sight. When I found out how things was with me—George never thought of me as I was thinking of him, only I was feared lest he might if 'Lisbeth always drove him away from her—I went to the Hall and told my trouble to Mrs. Seagrave and begged her to help me to get away till the wedding was over. She was like a mother to me, and said I should go away with her and not come home till I felt able to bear it, and so it was fixed and so it would have stayed fixed if she had not died so suddenly and the master had not discharged me, and all in a moment I had to face coming home again. I have been at home three or four days and know I could not bear it, and father won't hear of my going away again. Here I can't stay! Don't pity me, don't fret about me, I shall soon be out of pain. Don't blame me, for I got into it innocently, and am getting out of it the best way I can. Bless you all! Pray for poor Hetty.'

George read and wept, and wept and read, but he went home and no one ever knew that he had left the house. As for the letter he burnt it. 'Lisbeth's happiness and old David's seemed to him to demand that breach of trust. He also carried out the programme he had designed, and with complete success.

'The dear bairn, Lord love her, must have slipped her foot and fallen in, and we are spared the misery of thinking she put hersel' away,' said her father.

'There's another thought that's not come into your mind,' said 'Lisbeth. 'Her death was fore-ordained. That waft I saw i' the kirk gone a year to-day was our Hetty's and not mine!'

MARGARET HUNT.

Henri d'Orléans, Duc d'Aumale.

MANY pens, worthier than mine to deal with the life of the Prince who has recently passed away, will describe the soldier, the scholar, the gentleman. I fain would inscribe to his memory a few sentences and speak of him as my husband knew him for forty years—that is, in the days of the first exile at Twickenham and Wood Norton, the second exile in London, and then, when the tardy remorse of the French Government recalled him, at the Château of Chantilly.

My husband, who had been presented to the King at the Tuileries during a visit to Paris for the study of subjects connected with Government departments, was in 1853 presented to the Duc d'Aumale by Lady Alice Peel at a breakfast at Marble Hill; an invitation to a dinner at York House followed—the first of the many gracious occasions when he (and later on I) shared the hospitality of the Princes.

The Duc was then in his thirty-second year. Those who saw him in the uniform of his regiment, the picturesque grey and crimson, or who early in the eighties saw, at the Salon, Bonnat's striking portrait, will have noted and remembered his princely bearing, the fire of his look, those marvellous steel-blue eyes, which lighted up with enthusiasm as he spoke of battlefields and feats of arms, which froze the heart of recreant soldier or dishonest politician on more than one occasion.

It was when he was only twenty-two that the Duc acquired no common distinction in the world by a brilliant campaign in Algeria, and especially by his exploit of the capture of the Smala of Abd-el-Kader. A soldier the Duc remained to the last, though forbidden to wear the uniform of the army he adored and the regiment he had led to victory. But the Duc was not only a soldier: the arts of peace as well as the arts of war were his study and delight. He was a man of letters, of varied reading, of marvellous memory, of rare power of narrative.

The education of the Prince began under the guidance of Alfred-Auguste Cuvillier-Fleury, a man whose liberal education, varied interests, and rare opportunity of developing his own mind, both in France and in Italy, prepared him for the part for which he was selected by Louis Philippe.

As soon as the boy could sit his pony, he rode every morning in the Bois de Boulogne with his tutor and the accomplished friends who discussed with him arts and letters, topics beyond the young Prince's comprehension then, but which laid the foundation of that great love of art which was the solace of old age as it had been the delight of manhood, as well as of the taste for animated conversation, in which he became a proficient. It was not without a pang to Cuvillier-Fleury that the companionship came to its end when the Prince began a soldier's career; but the friendship begun in boyhood was never interrupted, and was continued to the last.

At the Institut they became *confrères*.

The Duc d'Aumale's position at the Institut, as well as his own predilections, brought him into personal relations with all that was most distinguished in art, letters, and science in the world at large. His last appearance at the séance of the Académie Française was on March 18 of this year. He read a paper: 'Le roi Louis-Philippe et le droit de grâce,' pointing out the two dominant qualities of the King, his father—respect for life, respect for law. In this paper the Prince barely refers to the occasion when his own life was endangered by a pistol shot aimed at him as he rode into Paris at the head of his regiment just returned from Africa (September 13, 1841). It was at a séance of the Académie, November 16, 1895, that the Prince referred to the death of my husband in words marked by appreciation and regard, and his was the letter which congratulated my husband on being named an *associé étranger* in 1888. . . . But, above all, it was to the Institut on October 25, 1886, he gave the Château and museums of Chantilly, with a suitable endowment, the gift to take effect on his death.

With the Castle of Chantilly the Duc is so closely associated, he was so fond of describing and showing it to his friends, that I may give a brief account of it, chiefly from the Duc's words. The first owner of Chantilly was the Connétable Anne de Montmorency, who retired to sulk there in 1541. After the Peace of the Pyrenees, 1659, the Grand Condé made it his favourite residence; he bought rare books, and the collection of MSS.

made by the Montmorencys was enriched by fresh acquisitions. During his exile in Holland he studied art. He became the possessor of pictures, porcelains, *objets d'art* of every kind. Then, too, he followed with interest the details of gardening, of forestry, of canals, and water supply at Chantilly. Le Nôtre, Mansart, La Quintinie carried out the works Condé planned.

'I saw the Prince de Condé,' writes Burnet; 'he had a great quickness of apprehension, and was thought the best judge in France, both of wit and learning;' in a higher degree these words apply to the Duc d'Aumale.

At the time of the French Revolution the greater part of the building was destroyed; during 'The Terror' troops and prisoners were lodged in some of the outlying buildings.

In 1845 the Duc d'Aumale had plans prepared for a reconstruction of the Château, parts of which had been used as a prison during 'The Terror,' but the establishment of the Empire interposed a long interval between these plans and their execution, and it was not till 1872 that they were resumed. But in 1845 the plans included the private apartments of the gentle and amiable Duchess, and when they were completed a long fair tress of the Duchess's beautiful hair was the touching symbol of what had been. It was placed in a frame which hung over the Duc's bed. The Duchess adored her husband, and it was her great delight to listen to that rich melodious voice, as it poured forth the brilliant narrative which the presence of one or two sympathetic listeners in the smoking-room would call forth. Of the Royal pair one of these listeners wrote after the death of the Duchess: 'Their lot was destined to great vicissitudes of fortune—to splendour, to exile, to celebrity, to retirement, to great enjoyments and great sorrows, to distant journeys, and to the simplicity of domestic life; but in all these changes the Duchess bore her part with an entire and devoted sympathy in the fate of her husband. She accompanied him in his journeys, she ever shared his taste for the hardier sports of the field; she presided over the hospitalities of Twickenham, but she loved best their simpler life at Wood Norton, where she enjoyed without alloy the pleasures of country life and the undivided society of her husband and surviving son.

It was at Wood Norton that the Duc wrote those pathetic words which preface his introduction to the Memoir of Cuvillier-Fleury, his friend and teacher: 'In the calm retreat of my cottage at Wood Norton, once made gay by the presence of wife

and child, when, driven by adverse fortune, I sit in the evening of life and cast my survey over the letters of my old master, my oldest friend.' (1888.)

It was from Chantilly a few weeks ago that he sent a gracious message accepting from the writer of these lines some MSS. 'Il chante souvent, quand il est de belle humeur, quelque vieux refrain de Béranger, et pour Rossi il l'a eu quelque temps pour professeur d'économie politique,' were M. Laugel's words, in transmitting the message.

How delightful were the evenings in the splendid library at Chantilly, when the Prince showed the *Livre d'heures de St. Lois* to his guests and told them when and how he acquired rare specimens of illuminated books or quaint pamphlets, and the big parcel of some which had been recently bound was opened, each brochure bound separately and splendidly!

There were picnic teas in some temple, or pavilion, to which country neighbours were bidden, and some local legend was narrated and the Prince was *de belle humeur*; for, spite of political adversity and domestic sorrows, his bright gaiety of spirits survived to almost the moment when the terrible news of that catastrophe at Paris was flashed to him. For the moment he thought only of such messages to mourners, such tributes of flowers as befitted the sad funeral rites, and then, swiftly, silently, the touch of death came to spare him further sorrow, and unite his spirit with those loved and lost.

By a wish expressed long before his death he was laid in the mausoleum at Dreux, where Louis-Philippe, when Duc d'Orléans, built on the site of an old church the present chapel and mausoleum. There are interred the last Duchesse de Penthièvre; the beautiful and accomplished Princesse Marie, the Duc d'Orléans, children of the King; his mother, Louise-Marie-Adélaïde de Bourbon-Penthièvre, who, after the death of her brother, the Prince de Lamballe, became the heiress of vast wealth. She laid the first stone of the monument, where are laid generations of the royal dead, guarded by the Angel of Resignation, that exquisite work of the Princesse Marie, where, when the French nation can see the past with larger, other eyes, will rest the remains of the King and his saintly wife.

CHRISTINE G. J. REEVE.

At the Sign of the Ship.

SOME people have been disquieting themselves in vain, because Mr. Quiller-Couch is going to finish Mr. Stevenson's novel, *St. Ives*. What possible objection a rational being can entertain to this project I fail to understand. The reason for adding a *dénouement* by another hand is obvious. The public do not care for a tale without an end. If anybody is so sensitive as not to want a *dénouement*, by an excellent writer whose genius Mr. Stevenson was among the first to recognise, on the lines which Mr. Stevenson himself laid down, that reader may stop where Mr. Stevenson stopped. He will suffer nothing, and the public, including myself, will gain a great deal.

* * *

Nobody could have ended *Weir of Hermiston*; perhaps even the author might have found it very difficult. Not much more than a third was written. The author might have changed his mind, which is rather sketchily known. About *St. Ives* his mind is well understood. It is not 'subtle' and 'passionate,' it is a romance, almost a boy's book, and answers to the escape of Peter Simple and O'Brien through France. Excellent reading it is, and will be. Mr. Quiller-Couch has, as Mr. Stevenson himself said to a friend of his and mine, 'the genius for romance.' He has studied Mr. Stevenson's manner; nor, I am certain, will he fail to do justice to his dead fellow-worker. For some readers interest is added; for none is anything taken away, since none need peruse a line beyond the original. I firmly believe that Mr. Stevenson himself would gladly have accepted this aid, which Mr. Quiller-Couch very generously lends, for he must have foreseen the critical clamour. The author of *The Splendid Spur* has won his own in this kind of narrative, to which, for one, I wish that he would return again occasionally. Mr. Conan Doyle, too, can

tell a tale of this sort, and I wish he would give us more of *Brigadier Gérard, his Adventures*.

* * *

Collaboration is, generally, rather a farce. One man does the actual writing, the other is a looker-on, or a critic, or merely supplies the idea. Mere ideas are cheap enough. The authors are seldom on, or near, a level of ability. But in the case of *St. Ives* there is no such disparity, and, above all, we know just where the new hand begins. If we did not, I doubt if we should find out. If ever I collaborated, I would write the whole story first, and let the other gentleman work his will on it afterwards. In that way you do not merely look on.

* * *

The committee, or committees, concerned in the memorial to Mr. R. L. Stevenson do not seem to have decided what form the memorial should take. May one suggest a group of statuary, representing Mr. George Moore in the act of instructing Mr. Stevenson—*un très petit Stevenson et un Moore immense*? This occurs to me because, as I read in Q's 'Causerie' in *The Speaker*, Mr. Moore has been admonishing the world about Mr. Stevenson's literary backslidings. It appears that he was not sufficiently addicted to moral ideas. To myself it seemed that he was rather too partial to them, having inherited a taste for the didactic from his ancestor, Burns's Dr. Smith of the 'cauld harangues.' However, I have not seen Mr. Moore's censures, and may mistake their drift. It seems that they have excited irritation in our Northern countrymen. It is much wiser to accept rebuke in a genial spirit, and to adorn Edinburgh, or Cork perhaps, with the memorial which I venture to suggest. There might be friezes in low relief on the base, Mr. Moore reading his own works to Swift, Scott, Mr. Stevenson, Llywarch Hen, M. Zola, and other eminent but thoughtless and imperfectly educated Celts; showing them how to write romance, administering correction, and bestowing prizes.

* * *

Mr. Stevenson's period of recognition was very brief; indeed, the great heart of the public never warmed to him as it does to other artists. I do not speak with authority, but I doubt if he ever received more than 25,000*l.* for a single story. I do not remember seeing any stationer's advertisement like this: 'Yes,

you may say that I used your Patent Ameliorated Blotting Pad when I wrote *The Wrecker*. I can use your Blotting Pad in the dark, when bicycling, and on many other occasions which I find inspiring. Yours faithfully, R. L. S.'

* * *

The author has told somewhat of the genesis of *Jekyll and Hyde*. Its early commercial fortunes were unpropitious. It was offered to the editor of LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE, who said that he thought the story should be taken at one draught, not in sips. Mr. Stevenson agreed, and the book was printed as a shilling novel. But the end of the year was approaching, and the railway bookstalls declined to take any copies of Dr. Jekyll. They were, like Charles Lamb, 'quite full inside.' The novel was therefore held over till the following year, when the public scarcely purchased a copy. This was in 1886, four years after *Treasure Island*. The prospect was comfortless, when a long review of Dr. Jekyll appeared in the *Times*. Then, at last, the public began 'to take notice.' Presently the clergy found Dr. Jekyll out. They recognised a statement of St. Paul's about the 'war in his members,' and they reinforced the Apostle's remarks by the strange case, and modern instance, of Dr. Jekyll. Then, ah then, all was prosperity. The moral did the business, the large churchgoing public heard of the doctor, heard that it was 'as good as a sermon,' and came forward with their shillings. I myself once indited a kind of fiction about a good little girl, Papist, unluckily. One clergyman rose. Ladies of my family, to their scarcely dissembled mirth, heard the good girl made the topic of an address from the pulpit. But what is *one* clergyman, and he a member of the Erastian Church of England? Without distinction of denomination the ministers of religion plumped for Dr. Jekyll. At length Mr. Stevenson's name became familiar to the public. But they never really got over his style, and he can scarcely be called a really popular author.

* * *

What to do with your villain in a novel is certainly a difficulty. One plan, at present popular and easy, is to let him go on flourishing 'like a green bay horse,' as some idiot once said. To this method I have been myself reduced—besides, it was historically true. But here, as cookery books have it, is 'another way.' Peg your villain down under a petrifying spring (there is

one near Royat) till he is as stony as his heart, and remains a monument of iniquity. 'Remember Lot's wife,' for even this story has been told before.

* * *

Criticism, like the law as described by Mr. Bumble, is apt to be 'a Hass.' For one I had always regarded the partial resurrection of the Master of Ballantrae as an after-thought, a snatch at a conclusion. But in a fragment published in the Edinburgh edition of Mr. Stevenson's works, he says that this idea was really the germ of the novel, so apt are our critical guesses to fly far wide of the mark. It seems, too, that the author had known in real life the original, as far as such persons have originals, of his delightful Chevalier Burke. Some critics, it appears, have regarded the Chevalier as a reminiscence of Barry Lyndon. Mr. Matthews, in an American periodical, writes as if *Barry Lyndon* were almost a forgotten novel of Thackeray's. Let us hope that the public taste is not so undiscerning and ungrateful. Mr. Matthews complains of Thackeray for stating his own opinion of Mr. Lyndon in a footnote. If this be wrong, Molière sinned in the same way. Above a speech of Tartuffe he has written, 'C'est un scélérat qui parle;' apparently he could not trust the discrimination of his readers. Twice at least, in *Barry* and in *The Fatal Boots*, Thackeray made the villain of the romance the narrator. Consequently this form can hardly be adopted again by a novelist, it can never seem original.

* * *

'It would be like my Master,' Mr. Stevenson wrote, 'to curry favour with the Prince's Irishmen.' Probably the Scots have been unjust to the Prince's Irishmen. Their presence inevitably awoke the old Scoto-Irish jealousies. But that they were good officers Ker of Graden attests, in the case of the battle of Falkirk. They were egregiously wrong in suspecting the loyalty of Lord George Murray. But when, contrary to Highland advice, they induced Charles to sail to the Islands, they removed him, as was known at the time, from the intrigues of a Highland chief who, by his own written statement, had already sold himself to the Duke of Cumberland, and who was trying to persuade Charles to stay on the mainland. This man was a perfect Barry Lyndon, without, his critics said, the courage of the Irish adventurer. His published *Life* seems to be a very scarce volume, and additions

yet more curious can now be made to a record of crime, in every kind, almost without example. How admirably Mr. Stevenson could have presented him, and how constantly we miss that rare genius of his. This *desiderium*, indeed, is Mr. Stevenson's true memorial, whatever art may do for his more permanent, if not more sympathetic, renown.

* * *

An admirer in Dunedin, New Zealand, has cited the song, 'Time for us to go,' as an example of Mr. Stevenson's skill in such rude lays. The verses occur in the play of 'Admiral Guinea,' by Mr. Stevenson and Mr. Henley. I have a strong impression that the lines are really, at least in part, a traditional 'chanty,' but Mr. Henley probably knows, as in Burns's songs, the exact truth of the case. Mr. Stevenson is not like Hamilton of Bangour, whose poetic fame rests entirely on a restatement of the old ballad, 'Willie's drowned in Yarrow.'

* * *

Surely the greatest change that ever came over the ideas of a nation was that which swept across Scotland in two generations, between 1710 and 1740. The Rev. Mr. Wodrow, the historian of the Covenanters, stands for the early period. He is an enthusiastic Calvinist; it was he, I think, who told a poor woman with a large family that 'it would be an uncouth mercy if all her children were saved.' This was logical, from his point of view—they that be saved are few; here is a family of a dozen, and their mother actually expects to meet them all in the New Jerusalem. Such a mercy would be 'uncouth.' Then Wodrow believes in every kind of portent, and miracle, and warning, and bogle, down to Cotton Mather's lost sermon, marvellously pursuing him and rejoining him as he rides. But take Wodrow's contemporary, younger by a generation, Dr. Carlyle, 'Jupiter Carlyle.' All that Wodrow admired, believed in, delighted in, from predestination to a spook, is, to Carlyle, 'enthusiasm.' He was present at that famous scene described in *The Heart of Midlothian*, when Robertson, the Smuggler, made his escape out of church, whither he had been taken to hear his last sermon. Then came the shooting of the mob, at Wilson's hanging, by orders of Captain Porteous. Porteous was condemned, but reprieved. Dr. Carlyle writes that there was much public interest in the matter, as a proof of which he mentions that, one night, he dreamed of

Porteous hanging in the Grass Market. He rose early, met a man of his acquaintance, and asked, 'What news?' 'Porteous was hanged last night by a mob in the Grass Market.' The coincidence with the dream would have been a miracle to Wodrow, to his young contemporary it was a proof of the general interest in the subject. And so it is throughout. In Dr. Carlyle's Memoirs, I do not remember a trace of what is essential in Christianity. He might be an honest, sagacious, rather sensual contemporary of Cicero's, yet he represented a large body of the Scottish clergy, being an early specimen of Burns's 'Moderates.' The Wodrows of his day he dismisses as 'the wild party,' people of no account. It would be a curious investigation to trace the influences which converted a nation of 'enthusiasts' into a people of Gallios, at the very moment when Wesley and Whitefield were re-awakening 'enthusiasm,' spiritual life.

* * *

The following anecdote would have delighted Wodrow, though how he would have classed it I cannot guess. A gentleman, very well known in many ways, was at his house in the country, where a young lady was visiting himself and his wife. She lost a pearl from a ring. It could not be found, and she went home. Four or five weeks later she again visited her friends, arriving in the evening, and, as it happened, not going into the library that day. Next morning, while dressing, her host said to his wife:

'Did you remember to take away the pearl that Mary lost from the place where I put it?'

'You never said anything about it,' answered the lady.

'Oh, excuse me! I told both you and her that I found it in a chink of the bureau in the library, and put it on the top of my papers, and I asked you to take it lest the servants should dust it away in the morning.'

The lady then went to her guest's room and asked her if she remembered being told about the discovery of the pearl. She agreed with her hostess that the subject had not even been mentioned.

'Then the maids will have swept it away,' said my friend, and he ran down to his study in his dressing-gown. The pearl was not where he remembered having laid it. But he looked in the crevice where he said that he had found it, and there lay the pearl.

* * *

One explanation would be that he had dreamed the whole affair, the dream being suggested by an unconscious, or sub-conscious, perception of the pearl in the crevice. But he cannot recall any dream on the subject; he was certain that he had found the thing when wide awake, taken it out of the chink, placed it on the top of his papers, and told both ladies.

It is just conceivable that he actually did find it and place it on the papers; that, meaning to inform the ladies, he believed that he had actually done so; and that the pearl was accidentally swept back by the housemaid into the chink of the bureau whence he had rescued it. This would not have been Wodrow's explanation, but it would have recommended itself to Dr. Carlyle.

* * *

I know personally of four cases in which lost articles were discovered by a dream of the loser's. The last case was the key of the cellar—an awkward thing to lose. After it had been missing for days the owner dreamed that it was lying in a certain drawer, where it was found, though why, how, or when it was placed there memory could not recall. Sleep seems occasionally to have this power of reviving lost memories of things done or perceived with imperfect waking consciousness.

* * *

I have a crystal ball story which would be very good if one could get confirmation. In working at certain manuscripts of the last century I came across a mysterious Mademoiselle Luci, so called in secret correspondence. I only knew that she was the bosom friend of another lady, known, in the same correspondence, by the cypher name of La Grande Main, or La G. M. Quite baffled by these dead women, I asked a lady, by letter, to 'look for Mademoiselle Luci,' without any other indication. My friend looked, like an Egyptian seer, in the ink-pot! She described to me, by letter, a young lady, about twenty-eight, in the dress of 1750 or so, dark, pretty, rather in the style of Madame Patti, 'with too much gums for perfect beauty. On her shoulder is laid a beautiful long white hand, with a marquise diamond ring. Plainly the *grande main* of the lady's bosom friend, of whom at that moment nobody but myself and one other living person (unknown to the seer of the ink-pot) had ever heard. I later found out the real names of Mdlle. Luci and her friend, and have moved heaven and earth, and all the artistic *savants* of Paris, to

discover a portrait of Mdle. Luci. She was well known in literary society about 1745-1752, but neither of her nor her friend can I find any personal trace, still less a portrait or miniature. The Grande Main was a Madame de Vassé, Mdle. Luci's family name was Ferrand; their best known friend (who writes about both) was Condillac the philosopher. But there seems to be no biography or published correspondence of Condillac, and it will, indeed, be 'an uncouth mercy' if ever we discover a portrait of Mdle. Luci, and learn whether she was or was not like her image in the ink-pot. She may have been an elderly old maid, but perhaps Condillac would in that case have been less interested than he was, while her other famous friend certainly writes to her about a *passée* beauty, in a style which he would hardly employ if it could reflect upon his correspondent. She was young enough to excite jealousy, but it does not follow that she was only about twenty-eight. The coincidence of the beautiful long hand with the marquise diamond ring is like a refraction somehow thrown up by the faded unknown past, but that is all.

* *

Mr. Halford, in *Making a Fishery* writes as if there were some doubt as to whether grayling work up stream. He cites, with some triumph, a case in which grayling migrated 1 mile 750 yards up stream. Surely there can be no doubt on this point. Some years ago grayling were introduced on the lower Tweed, near Kelso, I think. Not very long afterwards I caught one, about three quarters of a pound weight, in a stream just below Sunderland Hall, some three miles above Galashiels. This is many miles above the place where grayling were introduced, though why anybody wishes to acclimatise 'the dearest heartedest, chuckleheadedest fish that swims' I do not know. He can, of course, be fished for, and is in season when trout are out of season, but he is eternally taking the fly in spring and summer, when he is out of season and is a nuisance. The Wilton Club have turned him in, but he was in the Wylie before, and one sympathises with an owner of water on the Kennet, who tried to turn him out.

* *

I did not know that I was an idolater of Highland Mary till Messrs. Henley and Henderson said so in the *New Review*. Going to Kintyre, last August, one went down Clyde, and, near

Dunoon, the passengers made a rush to one side of the steamer. On the shore opposite was a small pedestal, red in hue, in shape like a cotton pinn. Round it was a fence of new rails, and it was topped by a stumpy effigy of a young woman. This I guessed, or divined, to be Highland Mary, but I remained master of myself. I did not fall on my knees, on deck, nay, I confess that I laughed. To this imposing monument or memorial I had not subscribed; in truth, I don't know why I am called an idolater of the poor girl. Our authors thus describe the origin of her cult.

* * *

The late Mr. Robert Chambers wrote about her thus, they say: 'There is, indeed, all desirable reason to believe that Mary was a character to have graced, if not even rectified, a companion spirit such as Burns, who, in subsequent years, might well have imagined that with her he could have been something different from what he was:—

"What conquest o'er each erring thought
Of that fierce realm had Agnes wrought,
I had not wandered wild and wide
With such an angel for my guide;
Nor heaven, nor earth, could then reprove me,
If she had lived, and lived to love me."

'But what is the evidence on which he (Mr. Chambers) asks us to credit his wonderful theory? What but the witness of the young woman's own mother!' Is there not some evidence, also, by Burns? I mean, does he not speak kindly of a girl, apparently Mary, in a letter, not to mention the verses about the 'dear departed shade'? Chambers's 'wonderful theory' is that Mary was a girl who might have 'graced,' or even 'rectified' Burns. This is not such a monstrously romantic opinion. A good girl would 'grace' anybody, and I think Burns says she was a good girl. As to 'rectifying' Robbie, that was rather beyond hope, if by 'rectifying' him is meant curbing his taste for women and whisky. But of course Burns, like Bothwell in the lines cited by Mr. Chambers, might have 'imagined' all sorts of things. Frank Bothwell was not an easy spirit to 'rectify.' There is something short of idolatry in Mr. Chambers's 'wonderful theory.' But there is reason to believe that Mary was a good girl. Jean Armour also, if not technically a good girl—she was no Pucelle—was a thoroughly good wife, as good (for Burns) as Amelia or

Sophia Western for Captain Booth or Tom Jones. One may think this very probable, without being idolatrous. At worst, ours is an amiable illusion, and stops short of monuments. It is impossible to please people about Burns and his connections. We know next to nothing about Highland Mary, and I fail to see any just occasion for excitement about her precise degree of moral excellence. However good she was, probably there were dozens of girls as good in Carrick or Kyle, who, luckily for the peace of literature, lacked a sacred bard. Once, dining alone at a club, I heard a man say to his friend, 'She is the best girl that ever trod God's earth.' This was high praise, whoever 'she' may have been. It would be idolatrous to say as much of Highland Mary, but I never did. I am not in possession of the necessary documents, including statistics. Besides, I have another favourite for the prize of 'the best girl who ever trod God's earth.' Possibly Dante's Beatrice was quite an ordinary young woman. It is with Dante that we have to reckon, not with Beatrice. Beatrice's husband, possibly, did not at all take Dante's view, and it would be interesting to know what Laura's husband thought of *her*.

* * *

If young ladies go on growing so very tall, they may make excellent ideals, but, as wives, how are they to be 'cherished'? Can a man of five feet ten inches 'cherish' a wife of six feet four? The phrase appears to include an idea of protection which seems a little incongruous. Judging from a distant view of her monument, Highland Mary was decidedly cherishable. She was not too tall and good for that form of adoration.

* * *

It is curious to get such peeps behind the scenes of the Poet, as we gain in Mr. Hale White's edition of Mr. Norton Longman's *Wordsworth and Coleridge Manuscripts*. In the author's hand, photographed, we have these highly uninspired lines :

And ye who willingly have heard
The tale I have been telling,
May in Kirkconnel churchyard view
The grave of lovely Ellen.

Or,

So coming back across the wave,
Without a groan on Ellen's grave
His body he extended,
And there his sorrows ended.

It is like a Bab Ballad. Then we have Coleridge announcing that *Christabel* 'is running up to 1,300 lines,' and where are they? this in 1800. In 1816 the poem had run 'one short,' or rather 600 short. Wordsworth's remarks on the Ancient Mariner, who 'has no distinct character in his profession as a mariner,' are profoundly comic. He certainly does not shiver his timbers, or hitch up his breeches, or say 'avast, my hearties,' or lay to anything, or chew a quid. 'Many persons have been much displeased with it,' and Wordsworth could hardly prevent Coleridge from suppressing it. This it is to be in advance of your age, and perhaps there is something in Ibsen after all. Many persons are much displeased with him, so far the parallel with Coleridge is complete. 'The Idiot Boy' appears in MS. 'The Ideot Boy.' Here is a verse deleted by S. T. C. in 'Love.'

I saw her bosom heave and swell,
 Heave and swell with inward sighs;
 I could not choose but love to see
 Her gentle Bosom rise.

For

Since then at an uncertain hour
 That Agony returns,

the printer carefully put

That agency returns.'

What 'agency'? *He* did not care. If I were a poet I would carefully burn my rough drafts. But even Wordsworth, in 1800, could hardly guess that, after a hundred years, we would be concerning ourselves about his.

ANDREW LANG.

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*The Chevalier d'Auriac.*¹

BY S. LEVETT YEATS,
AUTHOR OF 'THE HONOUR OF SAVELLI.'

CHAPTER XIX.

'PLAIN HENRI DE BOURBON.'

IMAGINE what it was to me, to whom every moment was worth its weight in gold, to see the group, and, above all, Ravallac, standing at the door of the Toison d'Or. Was there ever such cross-grained luck? If I could but pass down that narrow street without the hawk's eye of the Flagellant falling on me I might in an hour do all and more than I had ever hoped for. I could—*But tonne dieu!* What was the use of prating about what might be? Through the embrasure of the turret I covered Ravallac with my pistol, and twice half pressed the trigger and twice restrained myself. Even if he fell the shot would ruin all. It could not be risked, and I thrust the long black barrel back into my belt with a curse, and began to walk restlessly to and fro in the passage. It was impossible for me to keep still, my nerves were so strung. In a little I began to cool and sought my room, determined to occasionally take a turn to the turret and see if the guard was gone, but not to harass myself by watching them continually. In about an hour or so I wearied of sitting and looked out of my window again in the direction of Madame's room, as I called it to myself. At the moment of my doing so the shutter that was open towards my side suddenly closed. I could just make out a flash of white fingers on the dark woodwork, and then the

¹ Copyright 1896 by S. Levett Yeats.

face I longed to see looked out from the half of the window still open and drew back again almost on the instant. Feeling sure that she would look out once more, I leaned forwards. Madame did as I expected, and I could see the astonishment on her face and hear her cry of joy. She tried to converse with me by signals on her fingers, and for the first time I had occasion to bless what I had up to now considered a foolish accomplishment that I picked up as a boy when I was with Monseigneur de Joyeuse. Enough that Madame made me understand that she was well treated, and I let my dear know that there were those at work who would soon free her, and perhaps there was a word or so besides on a subject which concerned us two alone. It was in the midst of this part of our converse that she drew back all at once with a warning finger on her lips, and though I waited again for a full hour, forgetting the watchers below in the fresh fears that began to assail me, I did not see her again. At the end of that time, however, a white kerchief waved twice from the window and was then withdrawn. I turned back into my room, and now that I was certain she was there my impatience at being penned up as I was became almost insupportable, and heaven alone knows how I held myself in from making a dash for it and risking all on the venture. To cut the matter short, it wanted but a few minutes to sundown when, to my relief, I saw a cloaked figure I could not recognise step out of the Toison d'Or, and, after giving a few orders to the guards, pass briskly down the street. They in their turn went into the house, and at last the road was clear. I hesitated no further and hurried down the stairs. At the door I was stopped by my host, who inquired whither I was hastening.

'I have just seen a friend,' I answered, and the next moment was in the street. As I pressed forwards I had two minds about keeping my appointment with Pantin in the square behind St. Martin's, but as I went on I reflected that I had to pass that way, and as I might need the notary's aid I would wait there a few minutes, and if he did not come, go straight to de Belin with my news.

Although I was not in a frame of mind to observe what was going on around me, I soon became conscious that one of those sudden fogs which extend over the city at this period of the year had arisen as it were, out of nothing, and in the course of a few minutes I was compelled to slacken pace and pick my way slowly, and with the greatest caution in regard to landmarks, for I could not risk losing my way again. The fog was not a thick one, but

it was sufficient, united with the coming evening, to almost blur out the streets and houses and make the figures of passers-by loom out like large and indistinct shadows. Carefully as I had tried to impress the way on my memory, I hesitated more than once as to the route I should take, and it was with something that was like a sigh of relief that I found myself at last behind St. Martin's, whose spire towered above me, a tall, grey phantom. Here I halted for a moment to see if one of the few shadows that flickered now and then through the haze might give some signal by which I might recognise Pantin. It was in vain, and, determining to wait no longer, I set off at a round pace, when I was suddenly arrested by hearing the rich tones of a voice singing :

Frère Jacques, dormez-vous ?

Dormez-vous, dormez-vous ?

The clear notes rang out through the fog, bringing with them a hundred recollections of the time when I had last heard the chorus. And the voice ? That was not to be mistaken. It was de Belin, or else his ghost. Without a moment's hesitation I sang back the lines, advancing at the same time in the direction in which I had heard the voice. I had not gone fifty paces when I saw two tall shadows approaching me, and at the same time heard the verse again.

'Lisoi !' I called out.

'It is he,' I heard de Belin say.

Then the shadows stopped for a moment, and another and slighter figure joined them. Finally, one came forwards, and, when within a yard or so of me, spoke :

'D'Auriac, is it you ?'

'Yes. I was hastening to you. Man, I have discovered all !'

'*Morbleu !*' exclaimed the Compté ; 'the *chanson* was a happy thought, else we had missed you in this fog.'

'Is Pantin here ? We have not a moment to lose.'

'He is. It was he who guided us here. I have brought a friend with me. Do not ask his name ; but speak freely before him, and tell us exactly what you have discovered.'

With these words he took me by the arm and led me up to the two. In the shorter there was no difficulty in recognising Pantin. What with the mist, the mask on his face, and the roquelaure that enveloped him to the ears, I could make out nothing of the stranger, who did not even answer my salutation except by a slight inclination of his head. I need not say I

wasted no time, but laid the matter before them, and wound up with :

'And now, gentlemen, we are three swords ; let Pantin hasten and bring half a dozen of the Compte's people, and I guarantee that we not only free Madame, but take the whole brood of vipers.'

'These cards won't win,' said de Belin. 'We must have more witnesses than ourselves, who are known to be enemies of the Marshal. The King plays at More's this evening. He is like to be there now, or else very soon, for he is bound on a frolic to-night. We will go straight there. Villeroi and Sully are both to be in attendance, and also the Marshal.'

'The Marshal will not be there,' I interrupted.

'If so I wager the King asks for him, and I will take it on my head to explain. In half an hour we could be back with Sully and Villeroi, and then the game is ours. Do you not agree, monseigneur ?' and he turned to the stranger. All the answer was another grave inclination of the head.

'Come,' went on de Belin, slipping his arm into mine. 'Put yourself in my hands, d'Auriac, and I pledge you success. My God !' he broke off suddenly, 'to think we should win so completely.'

There was so much in what he said that I agreed without demur, and de Belin hurried me onwards, the stranger and Pantin following a few steps behind. As we went on de Belin whispered :

'Ask no questions, d'Auriac ; say nothing until you see Sully, and ten minutes after I promise you twenty swords.'

'If I do not get them in an hour,' I said grimly, 'I will go back myself and try what my own sword can do.'

'And I will go back with you, too—there, is that not enough ? Come, man !' and we hurried along through the mist as fast as we could walk, keeping on the left side of the road.

As we came up to St. Merri, de Belin stopped and blew sharply on a whistle. There was an answering call, and from under the Flamboyant portico of the church the figure of a man, with a led horse, slipped out into the fog, now yellow with the light of the street lamps. Without a word the stranger mounted, and the two passed us at a trot.

'What the devil does that mean ?' I exclaimed. 'Your Monseigneur has left us !'

'To return again,' answered the Compte drily. And then added, 'It will be a gay party at More's to-night, and it is time we were there.'

I made no answer, but, as we went on, could not help feeling uneasy in my mind at the thought of being recognised at More's; for after what de Belin had said of the King's temper towards me, I made sure that I should have scant mercy were I once arrested. And again, I would say that it was not for myself I was in dread, but for the probable consequence to Madame did any harm happen to me at this juncture.

But I had put my foot in the stirrup, and was bound to ride now; and then there was de Belin's word. At last we reached More's, and as we entered the hall I could not help wondering if the good Parisians knew that their King was playing at primero in an ordinary of the city, and would be later on, perhaps, pursued by the watch. More, whom I had not seen since my affair with d'Ayen, was in the hall, and at a word from de Belin conducted us himself up the stairway, though looking askance at me. We at length gained a long corridor, at the beginning of which Pantin was left. We stopped before the closed doors of a private dining-room from within which we could hear shouts of laughter.

'His Majesty and M. de Vitry arrived scarce a half-hour ago,' whispered More as we approached the door.

'We will not trouble you further,' replied the Compte; 'it is the rule at these little parties to enter unannounced.'

With these words he put his hand to the door and went in, I following at his heels. There were at least ten or a dozen men in the room standing round a table, at which sat the King engaged at play with M. de Bassompierre. Neither the King nor Bassompierre, who seemed absorbed in the game, took the least notice of our entrance, nor did they seem in the least disturbed by the constant laughter and converse that went on. The others, however, stopped, and then burst out in joyous greetings of de Belin and very haughty glances at me. M. le Grand, indeed, bent forward from his great height, and whispered audibly to the Compte:

'What scarecrow have you brought here, de Belin?'

'Our captain for to-night, duc—see, there is the Grand-Master looking as if each crown the King loses was the last drop of blood in the veins of Bethune.' And as he said this, Sully and he glanced at each other, and a light, like that in an opal, flamed in the great minister's eyes.

M. le Grand, however, seemed to be inclined for converse with me, and, stepping up, asked, 'And where do you lead us to-night, monsieur?'

I was about to make some answer when de Vitry interposed,

'My dear duc, there is plenty of time to ask that. I wager you fifty pistoles that d'Ayen there throws higher than you five times out of six.'

'Done,' replied Bellegarde—and then those who were not round the King and Bassompierre, gathered to watch Bellegarde and d'Ayen, whose cheeks were flushed with excitement as he threw with his left hand, the right being still in a sling.

In the meantime the King played on, taking no notice of anyone, his beaked nose dropping lower towards his chin as he lost one rouleau after another to Bassompierre.

'*Ventre St. Gris!*' he exclaimed at last, 'was ever such luck? At this rate I shall not have a shirt to my back in half an hour.'

'If the Marshal were only here,' said Sully, 'we could start off at once, Sire, instead of risking any more. I see de Belin has brought our guide.'

'Yes; where is Biron? I am sick of this;' and the King, who was a bad loser, rose from his seat impatiently, at the same time forgetting to hand over the last rouleau of pistoles he had lost to Bassompierre, and thrusting them back into his pocket with an absent gesture.

As if in answer to his question the door opened, admitting the slight figure and handsome face of de Gie.

'Where is the Marshal? Where is Biron?' asked ten voices in a breath.

'Yes, M. de Gie,' put in the King, 'where is Biron?'

'Sire, the Marshal is indisposed. He has begged me to present his excuses and to say he is too ill to come to-night;' and as he spoke I saw de Gie's jewelled fingers trembling, and his cheek had lost all colour.

'This is sorry news to spoil a gay evening,' said the King; and the Master-General, pulling a comfit box from his vest pocket, toyed with it in his hand as he followed, 'Biron must be ill, indeed, to stay away, Sire. What does your Majesty think? Shall we begin our rambles by calling on Monseigneur?'

'The very thing, Grand-Master; we will start at once.'

'But, Sire, the Marshal is too ill to see anyone—even your Majesty,' said de Gie desperately, and with whitening lips.

I thought I heard de Vitry mutter 'Traitor' under his thick monstache, but the Guardsman parried my glance with an unconcerned look. There was a silence of a half-minute at de Gie's speech, and the King reddened to the forehead.

'If it is as you say, M. le Vicompte, I know the Marshal too well not to feel sure that there are two persons whom he would see were he dying—which God forbid—and one of these two is his King. Grand-Master, we will go, but'—and his voice took a tone of sharp command, and his eyes rested first on de Gie, and then on the figure of a tall cavalier, at whose throat flashed the jewel of the Saint-Esprit—'but I must first ask M. de Vitry to do his duty.'

As for me I was dumb with astonishment, and half the faces around me were filled with amaze. Then de Vitry's voice broke the stillness:

'My lord of Epemon, your sword—and you too, M. le Vicompte.'

The duke slipped off his rapier with a sarcastic smile and handed the weapon to the Captain of the Guard; but we could hear the clicking of the buckles as de Gie's trembling fingers tried in vain to unclasp his belt. So agitated was he that de Vitry had to assist him in his task before it was accomplished.

The King spoke again in the same grating tones:

'M. de Bassompierre and you, de Luynes, I leave the prisoners in your charge. In the meantime, messieurs, we will slightly change our plans. I shall not go myself to the Marshal's house; but I depute you, Grand-Master, and these gentlemen here, all except de Vitry, who comes with me, to repair there in my name. Should M. de Biron not be able to see you, you will come to me—the Grand-Master knows where.'

'You will be careful, Sire,' said Sully.

'*Mordieu!* Yes—go, gentlemen.'

I was about to follow the others, but Belin caught me by the arm as he passed out. 'Stay where you are,' he whispered, and then we waited until the footsteps died away along the corridor, the King standing with his brows bent and muttering to himself:

'If it were not true—if it were not true.'

Suddenly he roused himself. 'Come, de Vitry—my mask and cloak; and you, too, sir,' he said, turning on me with a harsh glance. He put on his mask, drew the collar of his roquelaure up to his ears, and in a moment I recognised the silent stranger who had ridden off so abruptly from under the portico of St. Merri. I could not repress my start of surprise, and I thought I caught a strange glance in de Vitry's eyes; but the King's face was impassive as stone.

'We go out by the private stair, Sire; d'Aubusson is there

with the horses.' With these words he lifted the tapestry of the wall and touched a door. It swung back of its own accord, and the King stepped forward, the Captain of the Guard and myself on his heels. When we gained the little street at the back of More's, we saw there three mounted men with three led horses.

De Vitry adjusted the King's stirrup, who sprang into the saddle in silence, and then, motioning me to do likewise, mounted himself.

'Monsieur,' said the King to me, reining in his restive horse, 'you will lead us straight to your lodging, next to the Toison d'Or.'

'Sire,' I made answer, 'but it will be necessary to leave the horses by St. Martin's, as their presence near the Toison d'Or might arouse curiosity and suspicion.'

'I understand, monsieur; have the goodness to lead on.'

I rode at the head of the small troop, nosing my way through the fog with my mind full of feelings it was impossible to describe, but with my heart beating with joy. Neither d'Aubusson nor de Vitry gave a sign that they knew me, and, but for an occasional direction that I gave to turn to the right or left, we rode in silence through the mist, now beginning to clear, and through which the moon shone with the light of a faint night lamp behind lace curtains. At St. Martin's we dismounted. There was a whispered word between the lieutenant and de Vitry, and then the King, de Vitry, and myself pressed forwards on foot, leaving d'Aubusson and the troopers with the horses. It would take too long, if indeed I have the power, to describe the tumult in my mind as we wound in and out of the cross streets and bye lanes towards the Toison d'Or. At last we came to the jaws of the blind passage, and I whispered to de Vitry that we were there. Henry turned to de Vitry and asked:

'Are you sure the signals are understood, de Vitry?'

'Yes, Sire.'

There was no other word spoken, and keeping on the off side of the road, to avoid passing immediately before the door of the Toison d'Or, where it was possible a guard might be set, we went onward towards my lodging. Favoured by the mist, which still hung over the passage, we got through without accident; but I perceived that not a light glimmered from the face of Babette's house, though I could hear the bolts of the entrance-door being drawn, as if some one had entered a moment or so before we came up. My own lodging was, however, different, and through the

glaze of the window we could see the sickly glare of the light in the shop, where Monsieur and Madame were no doubt discussing the business of the day.

'We must quiet my landlord and his wife,' I whispered to de Vitry as we came up to the door.

'Very well,' he said, and then I knocked.

The fence, who was alone, himself opened the door. 'Ah, captain,' he exclaimed, 'we thought you were lost; but I see you have friends.' He said no more, for I seized his throat with a grip of iron, whilst de Vitry laced him up with his own belt. An improvised gag put a stop to all outcry, and in a trice he was lying like a log amongst his own stolen wares.

'Madame is doubtless in bed,' I said to him, and a sharp scream interrupted my words, for the woman, doubtless hearing the scuffle, had rushed into the room. M. de Vitry was, however, equal to the occasion, and she, too, was deposited beside her husband.

The King, who had taken no part in these proceedings, now said:

'I trust that woman's cry will not raise an alarm—*Ventre St. Gris* if it does!'

'Have no fear, Sire,' I said in a low tone; 'the cries of women in this part of your capital are too frequent to attract the least notice. They will but think that there has been a little conjugal difference.'

'So far, so good. De Vitry, you will stay here. At the first sound of the Grand-Master's whistle you will answer it, and they will know what to do. I have something to say to M. d'Auriac. Take me to your room, sir.'

I bowed, and, lighting a taper that stood in a holder of moulded brass—a prize that had doubtless come to my landlord through one of his clients—led the way up the rickety stairs, and stopping at the door of my chamber, opened it to let the King pass. For an instant he hesitated, fixing his keen and searching eyes on me—eyes that flashed and sparkled beneath the mask that covered half his features, and then spoke:

'M. d'Auriac, are you still an enemy of your King?'

I could make no answer; I did not know what to say, and stood, candle in hand, in silence. Then Henry laughed shortly and stepped into the room. I shut the door as I followed, and turned up the lamp on my table. Then, facing the King, I said, 'Sire, I await your orders.'

He had flung off his cloak and mask, and was leaning against the wardrobe, one hand on the hilt of his sword, and at my words he spoke slowly: 'I desire to see this room in the Toison d'Or, and to look upon the assembly that has met there with my own eyes.'

'Now, Sire?'

'Yes, now.'

'Your Majesty, it is not now possible!'

'*Ventre St. Gris!*—not possible!'

'Permit me, Sire—the only way is by this window. If your Majesty will step here, you will see the risk of it. I will go and see if they have met; but I conjure you not to make the attempt. The slightest accident would be fatal.'

'Do you think I have never scaled a rock before?' he said, craning out of the window. 'Am I a child, M. d'Auriac, or, *mille tonnerres*, because my beard is grey, am I in my dotage? I will go, sir, and thank God that for this moment I can drop the King and be a simple knight. You can stay behind, monsieur, if you like. I go to test the truth of your words.'

'Your Majesty must save yourself the trouble. I again entreat you; your life belongs to France.'

'I know that,' he interrupted haughtily. 'No more prating, please. Will you go first, or shall I?'

There was no answer to this. It flashed on me to call to de Vitry for aid to stop the King, but one look at those resolute features before me convinced me that such a course would be useless. I lowered the light, and then testing the ends of the ladder again and again, made the ascent as before. Leaning through the embrasure, I saw the dark figure of the King already holding on to the ladder, and he followed me, as agile as a cat. Making a long arm, I seized him by the shoulder, and with this assistance he clambered noiselessly over the parapet and lay beside me.

'Cahors over again,' he whispered; 'and that is the skylight. They burn bright lamps.'

'The easier for us to see, Sire. Creep forward softly and look.'

One by one we stole up to the skylight, and the King, raising himself, glanced in, my eyes following over his shoulders. For full five minutes we were there, hearing every word, seeing every soul, and then the King bent down softly, and, laying a hand on my shoulder, motioned me back. It was not until we reached the parapet that he said anything, and it was as if he were muttering a prayer to himself.

When we got back I helped him to dress. He did not, however, resume his roquelaure or hat, but stood playing with the hilt of his sword, letting his eye run backward and forward over the vacant space in my room. At last he turned to me:

'Monsieur, you have not answered the question I put you a moment before.'

'Sire,' I answered boldly, 'is it my fault?'

He began to pull at his moustache, keeping his eyes to the ground and saying to himself, 'Sully will not be here for a little; there is time.' As for me, I took my courage in both hands and waited. So a half-minute must have passed before he spoke again.

'Monsieur, if a gentleman has wronged another, there is only one course open. There is room enough here—take your sword and your place.'

'I—I——' I stammered. 'Your Majesty, I do not understand.'

'I never heard that monsieur le chevalier was dense in these matters. Come, sir, time presses—your place.'

'May my hand wither if I do,' I burst out. 'I will never stand so before the King.'

'Not before the King, monsieur, but before a man who considers himself a little wronged, too. What! is d'Auriac so high that he cannot stoop to cross a blade with plain Henri de Bourbon?'

And then it was as if God Himself took the scales from my eyes, and I fell on my knees before my King.

He raised me gently. 'Monsieur, I thank you. Had I for one moment led a soul to suspect that I believed in you from the first, this nest of traitors had never been found. St. Gris—even Sully was blinded. So far so good. It is much for a King to have gained a friend, and hark! if I am not mistaken, here is de Vitry.'

CHAPTER XX.

AT THE SIGN OF THE TOISON D'OR.

TURNING, we beheld de Vitry at the open door, the small and narrow figure of Pantin at his elbow, and, close behind, the stern features of the Grand-Master, the anxiety on whose face cleared as he saw the King before him. He was about to speak, but Henry burst in rapidly:

'I know all, my lord. It is time to act, not talk. *Arnidieu!* But I shall long remember this frolic!'

'It would seem that God has given us a great deliverance, Sire. All is ready. I came but to see that your Majesty was safe and unharmed, and to leave Du Praslin with a sufficient guard for your person whilst we took our prisoners.'

As Sully spoke the King threw his roquelaure over his arm and answered coldly, 'Monsieur, you are very good. When I want a guard I shall ask for one. I have yet to learn that Henri de Bourbon is to lurk in a corner whilst blows are going, and I shall lead the assault myself!'

'And the first shot from a window, fired by some *croquemort*, might leave France at the feet of Spain,' I cut in bluntly, whilst de Vitry stamped his foot with vexation, and the forehead of the Grand-Master wrinkled and furrowed, though he gave me an approving look from under his shaggy brows.

For a moment it was as if my words would have stayed the King. He looked at me fixedly and stabbed at the carpet with the point of his blade, repeating to himself, 'At the feet of Spain—Spain! Never!' he added, recovering himself and looking highly around. 'Never! Messieurs, we shall all yet see the lilies flaunting over the Escorial.'

'Amen!' exclaimed a voice from the darkness of the stairway, and I heard the grinding of a spurred heel on the woodwork of the floor.

'Come,' said the King, 'we have no time to lose, and if we delay longer that hot-head, de Belin, will strike the first blow.'

'With your Majesty's permission, I will make an assault on the rear,' I said.

'On the rear!' exclaimed de Vitry, whilst the Grand-Master said, 'It is impossible!'

But I only pointed to the window, and Henry laughed.

'*Ventrebleu!* I understand—a great idea! But, monsieur, take care how you give away a secret. I shall have no peace if Monseigneur the Grand-Master hears what has happened.'

I was young enough still to feel my face grow hot at the approval in the King's voice, and then, without another word, they passed out, *tramp, tramp*, down the stairs, all except Sully, who stayed behind for a moment.

'Monsieur,' he asked, 'what has happened between you and the King?'

'His Majesty has pardoned me.'

'A child might see that. What else? Be quick!'

'And has given me orders to meet you as you enter the Toison d'Or.'

The frown on his face cleared. 'Well answered, chevalier. The King, I see, has won a faithful and discreet friend. Make your attack when you hear the petard.' Then he, too, turned his broad shoulders on me and followed the rest.

As the sound of the heavy footfalls ceased I gave a last look at my pistols, drew in my sword-belt by a hole, and, all booted as I was, essayed the ladder again. The practice I had with it made the ascent easy now, and perhaps it was this that rendered me careless, for, as I was climbing, my foot slipped with a grating noise, and as I stopped for a moment, with one leg over the parapet and the other trailing over the drop behind, I heard a quick 'What is that?' through the open skylight. The voice was the Marshal's, and I almost felt that I could see his nervous start and rapid upward glance as the scrabbling noise reached his ears. Then came Lafin's answer, in those cool tones that can penetrate so far:

'A cat—only a cat, monseigneur!'

All was still again, and I crept softly to the opening. I did not dare look in, but crouched beneath the skylight, waiting for the signal. I had already observed that the skylight was but a light wooden framework, with a glazing between, and would need no great effort to break down—one strong push and the way was clear before me. So I stayed for a minute of breathless silence, then from far below came a sharp, shrill whistle, hurried exclamations from the plotters, and now the explosion of the petard, that made the house rock to and fro like a tree in the wind.

I had no need to force open the skylight. The effect of the explosion did that most effectually for me and blew out the lamps in the room below as well, reducing it on a sudden to absolute darkness. There was a yell of terror from the room, and, without a moment's hesitation, I swung through the window and dropped down amongst the conspirators. They were to a man crowding to the door, and not one took any note of my entrance, so great was their confusion. I followed the rush of hurrying figures as they passed through the door into a passage in dim light from a fire that burned in a small grate. One end of this passage was full of smoke, against which the bright flashes of drawn swords were as darts of lightning. Beyond the smoke and below we

could hear the clash of steel, cries of pain, and savage oaths, where men were fighting and dying hard. As I dashed down the passage, sword in hand, my only thought to reach the prisoner's room, one of the retreating figures turned and called out, 'Quick, monseigneur! follow me—the secret stair!'

It was Lafin. In the confusion and semi-gloom he had mistaken me for his chief. I made no answer, but, as I rushed forwards, struck him on the face with the hilt of my sword, and he rolled over like a log.

Now I was right in amongst the scared plotters, cheek by jowl with M. de Savoye's envoy, and I could have dropped him then and there, but that my whole heart was in Madame's room, and I knew that there were others who could and would deal with him.

As I elbowed my way through the press, vainly endeavouring to find the way to my dear's prison, we reached a landing from which a long stair led straight up, and here I heard the Marshal's voice, cracked with rage and fear.

'Lafin! de Gomeron! To me—here! here!'

'Ladies first, Marshal. I must look to my bride.'

Then through the smoke I saw de Gomeron's tall figure mounting the stair, and I rushed forward to follow him.

It was at this juncture that a portion of our own party forced their way to the landing, and one of them, whose sword was broken, flung himself upon me, dagger in hand, shouting, 'Death to traitors.' I had just time to seize his wrist. He tripped sideways over something that lay very quiet at our feet, and, dragging me down, we rolled over and over, with the clash of blades over us. 'It is I—fool—I, d'Auriac—let go!' I shouted, as he tried to stab at me.

'Let go you,' sputtered d'Aubusson's voice, and we loosed each other. I had no time for another word, and grasping my sword, which was hanging to my wrist by the knot, I sprang up, and the next moment was hot foot after de Gomeron.

I managed somehow to force my way through the crowd, but the stairway was half full of men, and at the head of it stood the free-lance, with a red sword in his hand, and two or three huddled objects that lay in shapeless masses around him.

Some one, with a reckless indifference to his own life—it was, I afterwards found out, Pantin—held up a torch, and as the flare of it shot up the stairway de Gomeron threw back his head and laughed at us.

'Twenty to one—come, gentlemen—or must I come to you?' He took a couple of steps down the stairs, and the crowd, that had made as if it would rush him, wavered and fell back, bearing me, hoarse with shouting for way, with them to the landing.

For the moment, penned up and utterly unable to get forward, I was a mere spectator of what followed.

The free-lance took one more downward step, and then a slight figure, with one arm in a sling, slid out from the press and flew at him.

It was d'Ayen, and I felt a sudden warming of the heart to the man who was going to his death.

'You—you traitor!' he gasped, as, using his sword with his left hand, his sword ripped the free-lance's ruff.

'Stand back, old fool—stand back—or—there! Take it,' and, with a sharp scream, d'Ayen fell backwards, the crowd splitting for a moment, so that he rolled to the foot of the stairs and came up at my feet. God rest his soul! He died at the last like a gallant man.

They were backing in confusion now, and above the din I could hear the mocking of de Gomeron.

'Come, gentlemen, do not delay, time presses.'

One rush through at that time might have saved him, but he stood there playing with death. With an effort I pushed d'Ayen, who was still breathing, against the side of the wall, to let the poor wretch die in such comfort as could be, and, seeing my chance at last, made my way to the front.

De Gomeron was half-way down the stairs by this, and when our swords met he did not for the moment recognise me. But at the second pass he realised, and the torchlight showed him pale to the forehead.

'You!' he said between his teeth.

'Yes—I—from under the Seine,' and I had run him through the throat but for our position, where the advantage was all his, and my reach too short. He had backed a step up as I spoke. Whether it was my sudden appearance or what, I know not, but from this moment his bravado left him, and he now fought doggedly and for dear life.

There was a hush behind me, and the light became brighter as more torches were brought, and I could now see the Camarguer white as a sheet, with two red spots on his cheeks.

'Do you like fighting a dead man, monsieur?' I asked as I parried a thrust in tierce.

He half groaned, and the red spot on his cheek grew bigger, but he made no answer, and step by step I forced him upwards.

He had been touched more than once, and there was a stain on his white satin doublet that was broadening each moment, whilst thrust and parry grew weaker, and something, I know not what, told me he was my man.

Messieurs, you who may read this, those at least of you who have stood sword in hand and face to face with a bitter foe, where the fight is to the last, will know that there are moments when it is as if God Himself nerves the arm and steels the wrist. And so it was then with me. I swear it that I forestalled each movement of the twinkling blade before me, that each artifice and trick the skilful swordsman who was fighting for his life employed was felt by something that guided my sword, now high, now low, and ever and again wet its point against the broad breast of the Camarguer.

So, too, with him—he was lost, and he knew it. But he was a brave man, if ever there was one, and he pulled himself together as we reached the upper landing for one last turn with the death that dogged him. So fierce was the attack he now made, that had he done so but a moment before, when the advantage of position was his, I know not what had happened. But now it was different. He was my man. I was carried away by the fire within me, or else in pity I might have spared him; but there is no need to speak of this more. He thrust too high. I parried and returned, so that the cross hilt of my rapier struck dully over his heart, and he died where he fell.

But one word escaped him, some long-lost memory, some secret of that iron heart came up at the last.

‘Denise!’ he gasped, and was gone.

I stood over him for a moment, a drumming in my ears, and then I heard the ringing of cheers and the rush of feet. Then a half-dozen strong shoulders were at the door before me, and as it fell back with a crash I sprang in and took a tall, slim, white-robed figure in my arms, and kissed her dear face again and again.

One by one those in the room stepped out and left us together, and for once a brave heart gave way and she sobbed like a child on my shoulder.

I said nothing, but held her to me, and so we might have been for a half-hour, when I heard de Belin’s voice at the broken door:

‘D’Auriac! Come, man!—the King waits! And bring your prisoner!’

There was a laugh in his voice and a light on his face as he spoke, and my dear lifted her swimming eyes to my face and I kissed her again, saying :

‘Come—my prisoner!’

As we passed out I kept between Claude and the grim figure still lying stark on the landing, and held her to me so that she could not see. So, with Lisois before us, we passed down the passage, filled now with men-at-arms, and halted before a room, the door of which was closed.

‘We must wait here a moment,’ said de Belin; and merely to say something, I asked :

‘I suppose we have the whole nest?’

‘All who were not killed. Stay! One escaped—that rascal Ravallac. I could have run him through, but did not care to soil my sword with such *canaille*, so his skin is safe.’

‘And Babette?’

He gave me an expressive look and muttered something about Montfaçon. Then the door was flung open and a stream of light poured forth. We entered, and saw the King standing surrounded by his friends, and a little on one side was the dejected group of conspirators.

The Marshal, now abject, mean, and cringing, was kneeling before Henry, who raised him as we entered, saying :

‘Biron, and you, Tremouille, and you all who called yourselves my friends, and lay in wait to destroy me and destroy your country—I cannot forget that we were old comrades, and for old friendships’ sake I have already told you that I forgive; and God give you all as clean a conscience as I have over the blood that has been spilt to-day.’

He ran his eye over the group, and they stood before him abashed and ashamed, and yet overcome with joy at escape when death seemed so certain; and he, their leader, the man who hoped to see his head on a crown-piece, broke into unmanly sobbing, and was led away vowing repentance—vows that he broke again, to find then that the mercy of the King was already strained to breaking-point.

As Lafin, with a white and bleeding face, led his master away, Henry’s eye fell on me, and he beckoned me to advance. I did so, leading Claude by the hand.

‘Chevalier,’ he said, ‘it is saying little when I say that it is through you that these misguided gentlemen have realised their wrong-doing. There is one recompense you would not let me

make you for the wrongs you have suffered. There is, however, a reward for your services which perhaps you will accept from me. I see before me a Royal Ward who has defied her guardian—*Ventre St. Gris!* My beard is getting over grey to look after such dainties. I surrender my Ward to your care.' As he said this he took Claude's hand and placed it in mine. 'I see, madame,' he added, 'that this time you have no objection to the King's choice. There—quite right. Kiss her, man!'

It is all over at last—that golden summer that was so long, and yet seems but a day. It is ten years ago that those shining eyes, that never met mine but with the love-light in them, were closed for ever; and the gift that God gave me that did He take back.

I am old, and grey, and worn. My son, the Vicompte de Bidache, is in Paris with the Cardinal, whilst I wait at Auriac for the message that will call me to her. When she went, Bidache, where we lived, became unbearable to me, and I came back here to wait till I too am called—to wait and watch the uneasy sea, to hear the scream of the gulls, and feel the keen salt air.

I have come to the last of the fair white sheets of paper the Curé brought for me from Havre this autumn, and it grows strangely dark even for my eyes. I will write no more, but sit out on the terrace and wait for the sunset. Perhaps she may call me to-day.

'Jacques, my hat and cloak!'

THE END.

George Mason.

THERE used to be a common and not undeserved reproach addressed to English people, that they went abroad to look for beauty and neglected that which lay at their doors—that they raved about the picturesque which it had cost them a long pilgrimage to find, but never knew that they had left some of Nature's most exquisite pictures behind them. Matters have mended in this respect of late; we have found out the beauties of Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, and of some parts even of England. Nobody is surprised that painters flock to Devon and Cornwall—nobody wonders even at their seeking Derbyshire; but how many people not born in Staffordshire know the charm of that despised county? The ordinary outsider thinks of it as the region of coal-pits and iron-works, of brick-kilns and potteries. He does not realise how relatively small an area is covered by the 'Black Country' and the Potteries, nor would ever imagine it a dwelling for the lover of peaceful scenes and changing skies. How could he guess that the most poetical of English painters, the one whose works are the most perfect illustrations of pastoral calm, was born and reared in this unappreciated country, and drew from the scenes of his youth the inspiration of his best work? Yet such is the case. The green valleys and wild moorlands of North Staffordshire live on the canvas of George Mason as only scenes thoroughly known and dearly loved ever do live, even under the pencil of genius. Not many miles away the ovens of the Potteries were throwing their grimy smoke into the air, and by some alchemy of Nature enriching the sunsets with extraordinary tints of purple and gold; but about Wetley, where the painter lived and worked, there was then, as there is now, nothing to be seen but the purest rural life, and often rugged beauty—a beauty so great, and to him so sympathetic, as to efface completely from his pictures the trace of that Italian manner

which he brought back after his thirteen years' work in Rome, and to form for him a completely new language and method in art.

About the beginning of this century, now drawing so near to its close, the old mystery of 'potting,' under the impulse given to it by Wedgwood, Spode, and some others, had taken a great step forward, and almost won for itself the dignity of an art. There were several families, less known than the Wedgwoods, yet of most prosperous and respectable standing, such as the Davenports, who are still represented in the county, and the Masons, who have wholly disappeared. In 1818, Mr. George Miles Mason was a potter of considerable importance, having, in partnership with a brother, large works at Fenton, near Stoke, and living with his family at a country house called Wetley Abbey. Possibly Wetley had once been a monastic foundation, but the present house, where Mr. George Miles Mason lived, is a perfectly modern building, spacious and commodious and surrounded by a good garden—exactly such a house as a well-to-do manufacturer of that time would build for himself, though not so fine as might suit more modern requirements. At Wetley, in the year 1818, the younger George Mason was born, and there he grew up, living the outdoor life of a country boy among the scenes he was afterwards to paint so marvellously.

He must have had a strong love and taste for drawing in his boyhood, for there is a family story of how once, when some local artist was at the house, painting a portrait of one of his elders, he borrowed brushes and colours, and produced a picture which is still in existence—'Gil Blas in the Cave.' It is probably not a very valuable work of art, but it is interesting to those to whom Mason himself is interesting, as being painted at so early an age, and at a time when he could hardly have even seen a good picture.

He was about sixteen when he painted 'Gil Blas' and eighteen when he first left home. It is rather curious to think of him during those two years, and during the holiday intervals of the succeeding ones, as the champion runner and jumper of his native parish, a good boxer, and fond of hunting in a country where hunting means hard work. He was a great reader too, laying up such stores in his memory that he could recite pages of his favourite writers, notably Sir Walter Scott; and that the country he painted was constantly associated for him with legend and story. Besides the 'Gil Blas' picture, he is said about this

time to have painted one representing a plague scene, which must have been ghastly and horrible enough.

It is most likely, however, that, till long after the year 1836, no one, not even himself, had any clear idea of what George Mason's future was to be. In that year, when he was eighteen, he was sent to Birmingham to study medicine. How far he studied it no one remains to tell us; the course pursued in those days must have been very unlike that rigorous five years' study, planted with examinations, as a steeplechase course is with fences, which tries the mettle of our medical students nowadays. Probably the boy who was entrusted to Dr. Watts of Birmingham made no very great progress; at any rate he never attained to any medical qualification, and his heart turned more and more from the dismal work of a doctor in a manufacturing town to thoughts of the beauty and freedom of Art. At length impatience became too strong to be any longer repressed; the young man threw physic to the dogs, and started, accompanied by a younger brother, on a pilgrimage to Rome. They went by a slow and circuitous route, often walking long distances, and reaching Rome in 1844, when George was already twenty-six years old.

And now was approaching a period of great vicissitude and of suffering, borne with very remarkable courage and resolution. At first, during the long journey when the brothers visited the towns lying between Paris and Rome, and for some time after they reached the Eternal City, all was delightful. Mason had escaped from an uncongenial profession; he was in Rome, sufficiently well off (he and his brother had each 200*l.* a year from their father); he was well received both in English and Italian society; he might paint as much or as little as he liked, and he was thoroughly disposed to enjoy himself with the friends whom his charm of manner and pleasant accomplishments gathered round him. He seems, however, to have had a curious love of independence in his studies, for we are assured that he never had a single lesson from any other artist. No doubt the influence of the immortal works among which he lived, and even the air he breathed, full of the noblest traditions of art, served both to discipline and to arouse his great natural powers. As time passed on, he began to be known as the painter of charming bits of peasant life, and to take a modest place among the colony of artists in Rome.

This pleasant life, however, came to a speedy end. A year or two after Mason's arrival in Rome heavy troubles fell upon his

family, ending in almost complete ruin. His father, involved, it is said, by the misconduct of a partner, was unable to continue his sons' allowance, and they were both urged to return home. Neither did so; the younger joined Garibaldi's army, while to the elder it was impossible to abandon the life to which he had devoted himself—paint he must, and would, and to paint successfully he must stay in Rome. How far he was able then to count the cost of his resolve no one can say; probably one cause of his extreme poverty was quite unforeseen—that is to say, the desertion of Rome for a year or two by almost all the rich foreign visitors, who were naturally the buyers of pictures.

There is a terrible story told of the experiences of that time—how, during the first winter, after having sold his watch and other trinkets, he was absolutely penniless, not possessing even a bed. Through the bitter nights of the Roman winter he slept on the floor of his studio, covered only with his clothes and a scrap of carpet. After Rome was taken by the French he reached the depth of privation, living for days on a paul's worth of polenta, and finally passing twenty-four hours altogether without food; but at that crisis a happy thought occurred to him. The children of well-to-do people who spent their morning on the Pincio often brought lunch with them, and sometimes left it. He went to the Pincio, and there, left on one of the benches, was an untouched bun. 'I ate it ravenously,' he said in telling the story, 'and never shall I forget the pain. I became giddy, and had to hold on to a tree to save myself from falling, and I was indignant at the laugh of some passers-by who evidently thought I was drunk. After that something turned up.' No wonder that, though after one sharp bout of illness things mended pretty steadily, his health was shattered. He painted at this time all sorts of pot-boilers—too glad if they did make the pot boil—but some of those scraps are treasures now. He had a wonderful gift for animal-painting; that is why the calves, the horses, the geese in his great pictures are not mere accessories. One of his very first profitable commissions was given him by a neighbour in the Midlands, Mr. Watts Russell, who chanced to meet him on a short Italian journey. Hunting was spoken of, and the two men found that they had hunted together. An acquaintance sprang up, and a picture was painted and paid for on more liberal terms than its predecessors.

There are a few of Mason's friends and associates of that time still living, among them the present P.R.A.; but the closest friend

of them all is lately gone from among us. Wide was the difference between the life of George Mason and that of Frederic Leighton. The one struggled through a martyrdom of poverty before he reached the dawn of success, and died without seeing its noon. The other lived a life of prosperity, and died surrounded by all the honours Art can confer. But the men loved each other, finding no bar to their affection either in the disparity of their fortunes or that of their ages (for Leighton was the younger by twelve or thirteen years); and it was to Leighton's guardianship, jointly with their mother's, that Mason when he died left his children.

As time went on the pictures of Italian peasant life which were produced with such delicate and ever-increasing skill began to be known to the world. Mason's first Academy picture was exhibited in 1857, after about thirteen years' work in Italy. It is called 'Ploughing in the Campagna.' Another, belonging to somewhere about the same period, is perhaps more interesting, and is a fine instance of his extraordinary skill in painting animals. It is called 'In the Campagna—Cattle Drinking,' a piece of clear vivid colour, truly Italian, and as different as possible from the soft and pensive tints he used in later days. A pair of splendid long-horned oxen have been drawn up beside a water-tank; one of them is still completely occupied with the enjoyment of the water, while the other, having quenched his thirst, is free to contemplate the universe with his great dreamy eyes. Another picture, 'Nelle Maremme,' which was in the Academy of 1850, still ranks high among Mason's works. It is altogether in his Italian manner, though it may have been finished in England.

There is a pretty story current which tells how when Leighton attained a brilliant success with his picture of 'Cimabue,' which was bought by the Queen, the young artist, with a delightfully generous impulse, dedicated the price he received to the purchase of two pictures by two of his friends. One of these is said to have been Mason's 'Wind on the Wold,' and the other a work by Holman Hunt. No doubt the heart of this story is true, but there is probably some mistake about the details. 'Cimabue' was exhibited and sold in 1855, while 'Wind on the Wold,' which was certainly in Leighton's collection at the time of his death, could not possibly have been painted before 1857, and probably ought to be assigned to 1860.

In 1858, conscious at last very likely of the solid beginnings of success, Mason came to England, and settled for a short time in Serjeants' Inn. This was a time of good fortune for him in more

ways than one ; for, going to visit his relations in Staffordshire and Shropshire, he met the lady who was afterwards his wife. To those who knew her in later life it is not difficult to guess what her charm must have been as a girl ; at any rate, this meeting led to the marriage and final settlement in England, without which George Mason would almost surely never have attained to his rank among painters.

Although Mrs. Mason brought a small dowry with her, the joint treasury was by no means rich, and after the marriage, towards the end of 1859, the old home at Wetley being then empty, the new household set itself up there. The house had been partly stripped, elder brothers having taken such of the furniture as they liked ; but there was enough left to make a comfortable dwelling of the smaller rooms, and no doubt the empty ones came in useful as studios and such novelties. And now, when the great change from bachelorhood in Rome to domestic life in England had been accomplished, and the husband and wife began to explore together, or with some artist guest, the beautiful wild commons and hillsides of North Staffordshire, the true inspiration of the painter's life came to him. Tentatively at first, with scraps of landscape or single figures—perhaps a child, perhaps a stray donkey or wilful calf—he worked on towards the exquisite, yet always perfectly rural and perfectly English, beauty of his later pictures. It is curious, in looking over the notices of his pictures as they appeared, to observe how resolved many of the critics are to insist that, even in drawing English landscape, Mason was seeing everything through an Italian medium. We may safely venture to affirm that these critics do not know the country Mason knew so well. That he saw with a finer discernment and a more exquisite truth than most of us is no doubt a fact, but it is no less a fact that all he saw, even to the grace of movement and attitude in his peasant figures, we also might see if we would but open our eyes. In our landscapes beauty is perpetually ebbing and flowing—the flight of a cloud shadow, the sudden sparkle of a stream where a sunbeam falls, the softer or brighter colouring of foliage that the breeze lifts—all these and a thousand other swift changes give a momentary indescribable loveliness that the eye and hand of a master may fix upon his canvas and make immortal ; and the living forms that move across the moor or through the valley have their moments of beauty also, their moments of unconscious elegance and dignity. Mason's true secret was the secret of seizing the time of perfection, the time when all was

harmonious and peaceful, the fullness of beauty that a harsh voice might disturb and chase away for ever, but which *has* existed before the painter's eyes, and does still exist for us in such pictures as the 'Evening Hymn' and 'Evening near Matlock.' One peculiarity of Mason's work was that when he had found a subject he thoroughly liked he clung to it, delighting in its different aspects and the different beauties that different lights and hours threw upon it. For instance, in three of his pictures the same little girl drives the same two calves through the same landscape. But this is not the result of poverty of subject, but rather of the exquisite delicacy of observation which made sunshine, mist, and wind each reveal in turn a charm altogether its own, and give an air of novelty to every part of each picture; in one of them child and calves are fighting their way against a strong breeze; in another a soft mist has swept up from the valley and almost surrounded the little group, authorising the new title, 'Mist on the Moor.' It was one of these called 'Wind on the Wold' that was lately sold among Lord Leighton's collection. A beautiful picture, not finished till 1871, but belonging essentially to this period, is the 'Blackberry Gatherers.' The scene is near Wetley, and the season, of course, autumn. A bleak mass of rocks rises in the background against a cloudy, windy sky; on a nearer acclivity stand gaunt pines, bent and twisted by the gale; as the hill slopes steeply down to the foreground a brook comes leaping towards us, and by the brookside three children are climbing among the brambles. The eldest of the three goes first, carefully carrying a big round dish half full of the dark fruit: her sun-bonnet and pinafore are blown about, but not very much, because this side of the hill is sheltered; she has ceased gathering for the moment and stands looking back down the hill; she is a true little Staffordshire maiden, erect, graceful, with the grace of perfect health and childish unconsciousness, such as there were plenty of thirty years ago in our villages; two younger girls following her are simply intent upon the biggest bunches they can find. The subject here is nothing remarkable (somebody says that Mason first intended it to be a witch gathering herbs by moonlight, but it shows no trace of such an eerie notion); the children are just real children, the landscape is a bit of absolute truth. We might have looked at them a hundred times and never found out that they made a picture fit to last for all time, but Mason, like another genius, might have said, though in a slightly different sense, 'Je prends mon bien où je le trouve.'

Perhaps the greatest of all his pictures, and one which belongs most absolutely to his native place, is 'The Evening Hymn,' the property of Mr. Percy Wyndham. It represents the time, just after sunset, when the sky is filled with a soft glow, made up of mingled and lovely lights, and the group of figures stand out distinct, yet not harsh, against this brightness. There is an old village church with its square tower in the background; through its windows glimmer faintly the candles that have lighted the service or choir practice just ended. A group of girls who have again taken up the singing as they go homewards are moving slowly towards us; one holds an open book, but their faces are raised as they sing—and one can almost hear the sweet voices—

Glory to Thee, my God, this night,
For all the blessings of the light.

Withdrawn a little to one side, two farm lads, with their dog, wait for the girls to go by; their faces are gentle and serious. By-and-by, perhaps, they will follow the little procession, and there will be jests and rustic flirtation; but at present they are under a spell, stirred and touched, as most Staffordshire people are apt to be, by the music; and the moment of self-forgetfulness, of a higher mood than common, has been caught and fixed by the painter. There was seemingly little diversity of sentiment even among critics on the subject of this lovely picture, though one of them (who confesses he does 'not know Mr. Mason's name') has the remarkable cleverness to 'know these girls are Wesleyans,' though they have evidently just left the parish church! Certainly Mason's brother artists appreciated it, for in January 1869, a few months after it was exhibited, he was elected A.R.A. by 'the extraordinary and probably unprecedented number of forty votes. The second choice fell upon Mr. E. J. Poynter.'¹ Two successive presidents of the Royal Academy were thus closely connected with Mason's life.

'The Evening Hymn' was a culminating point in the painter's career. It has been spoken of here because of its close and evident connection with Staffordshire, but as a finished picture its date is later. In 1867 his Academy picture was 'Evening: Matlock,' an exquisite piece of work, which brought him much reputation, and with reference to which a writer in the *French Gazette des Beaux Arts* says: 'Je ne sais pas si M. Mason est l'artiste le plus fort de l'Angleterre, mais il en est assurément le

¹ *Athenæum*, February 6, 1869.

plus rêveur et le plus raffiné.' At this period his friends had been for some time urging him to leave the country, and put himself into closer touch with the London world of painters and picture buyers, and probably the state of his health, rudely tried by past privation, and needing softer air than that of his native moorlands, had much to do with his wife's wish for the change. At any rate they decided on leaving Wetley, though to go from the scenes of his happiest inspirations, and the home of all his brightest days, must have been a trial. At Wetley he had been visited by Leighton, and they had discussed Art through many pleasant hours, telling each other of their designs, cheering each other in moments of discouragement, and even dotting down notes for pictures in each other's sketch books. The Mason family actually possess in one of their father's sketch books a first essay for Leighton's great picture of 'Captive Andromache.' Other painters had paid visits to the family—some of them very long ones—supplying congenial society; and at Wetley Mason's elder children were born. He used to say that he should like to have twenty children, if he were only rich enough to keep them; he delighted in having them with him even when he went out sketching; but only two, a son and a daughter, have any, even the most shadowy, recollection of Wetley itself. A second daughter was born just before the migration to London.

Mr. and Mrs. Mason settled at Hammersmith, and the manner of their doing so is rather characteristic. They were in London for the purpose of finding a home, and, having no idea whatever where they should seek it, Mr. Mason said, 'Let us take the first omnibus that passes, and go where it goes.' In those days it was no doubt easier than it is now to distinguish 'the first omnibus.' They got into one bound for Hammersmith, and at Hammersmith had the luck to find an old-fashioned comfortable house containing the needful studio and all other requirements. Here they settled, and here both husband and wife lived out the rest of their days.

It seems very doubtful whether, after all, London, even in the diluted form of Hammersmith, was as good for Mason as his native Staffordshire. His health certainly did not improve. In the Academy of 1869 he had two pictures, 'Only a Shower' and 'Girls Dancing,' the latter one of his most famous works, though at the time of its actual exhibition it was rather severely criticised as being crude and unfinished. He worked upon it afterwards when a little strength returned to him, and its faults are now

corrected and its beauties fixed and heightened. One of the figures in 'Only a Shower' reappeared in 1871 as 'A Milkmaid,' and makes a charming picture. She is young, as nearly all this painter's personages are, and a true country maiden. She has put down her milk-pail under the shade of budding boughs, and is gathering up with both hands the fallen mass of her bonny brown hair. The pose of the girlish figure with both arms uplifted is as graceful as it is natural—and the new milk in the pail! One is almost tempted to ask whether it was not beneath the dignity of an A.R.A. to fill a pail with what looks so very like real new milk.

It is to this year that the 'Blackberry Gatherers' belongs, and then in 1872 the name of George Mason appears for the last time in the Academy Catalogue attached to his picture of 'The Harvest Moon.' It had been long in hand, worked at in the intervals of bodily pain and weakness ever increasing, and probably the painter, as he fixed on his canvas the lovely tints of evening fading before the growing power of night, knew that his day was at its close. It was never anything like finished; the beautiful sky with a great round moon just disengaging itself from the evening mist, the fine outline of scythe-bearing figures as the labourers leave their late continued toil, the suggestion of romance in the two who lag behind—these are its beauties, and they are curiously touching as the work of a dying man, the more touching perhaps because they were left imperfect.

Suffering from heart disease and its painful companions, asthma and weakness, the painter lived for six months after the opening of this last exhibition, and died at Hammersmith on October 22, 1872, at the age of fifty-four, only fifteen years after the appearance of his first Academy picture.

Whether because of the absence in his case of technical training, or for any other reason, Mason had certain habits of work of his own, which are not without interest. He never, even for the smallest or slightest sketch, used any medium but oil colour, and yet he dotted down the most minute things that pleased him. It is said, and is very probably true, that his picture of 'Girls Dancing by the Sea' grew out of the beauty he observed in the momentary pose of a little country girl who held her scanty skirt spread with both hands while she danced, unconscious of any spectator. A mere curve, one or two harmonious lines commemorated in a sketch book, were the notes from which the rest of the picture grew.

On the actual canvas he painted over and over again, not merely altering, but absolutely obliterating what he found unpleasing, so that an incautious over-cleaning of one of his pictures might reveal an earlier and totally different one. He liked to have a new canvas painted thickly over with white, and this, after his marriage, his wife often did for him, armed with a big brush and paint enough to have served a house painter. To make up, perhaps, for the uninteresting nature of this work she was sometimes employed in painting in bits of the foreground of an almost finished picture.

Since Mason's death the public has had three different opportunities of seeing a number of his works collected together. The first of these was in February 1873, when, the artist being recently dead and fresh in the remembrance of his friends, the Burlington Fine Arts Club showed about seventy of his pictures in Savile Row. In 1879 a small gallery, exceedingly interesting to Staffordshire people, was opened at Burslem with an exhibition furnished by two Staffordshire painters, George Mason and James Holland. And in the splendid picture gallery of the Manchester Jubilee Exhibition one wall of a large room was dedicated to Mason, the adjacent one being given up to Fred. Walker, whose work more than any other—unless perhaps that of Millet—resembles Mason's. One of his most interesting pictures, 'The Cast Shoe,' is now in the National Gallery, and one, 'The Harvest Moon,' is at present at the Guildhall, where 'The Evening Hymn' and another were shown two years ago. Very rarely do any of them come into the market, and when they do so they sell for a price which makes one regret there is not some sort of royalty available for the painter's children. Unfortunately success came to him too late for him to save money. Two or three years more of life would probably have enabled him not only to add to England's store of fine pictures, but also to make provision for those he loved so dearly. When in 1872 Lord Leighton arranged and carried out the sale of sketches and small works left on hand, he realised for the benefit of the family a sum of nearly 6,000*l*. Mrs. Mason also received a pension from the Academy, and thus, with the help of her own little portion, the house at Hammersmith, which now sheltered six children, continued for many years to be a home of modest comfort. Troubles came to it, however, and the small income diminished, so that at Mrs. Mason's death last year, when the pension of course ceased, her daughters were no longer able to keep a home

together. This is not a place to speak of the details of these ladies' lives, and their brave struggles with the world, but it is very pleasant to know that, within the last few weeks, a small recognition of their father's importance to English art has been granted to them in the shape of a pension. The amount set aside by the richest country in the world for such purposes appears to be marvellously small, and almost ludicrously out of proportion to the sums given by private individuals to their favourite charities; but then, a Civil Service pension is *not* a charity—only an honour conferred in return for an honour done—and therefore we must not expect that the children of distinguished painters or writers should have more than a pittance awarded them.

ANNIE L. COGHILL.

In August.

GREY and still are sea and sky
 Where gleaming sea-gulls float and fly
 So still, so silent that it seems
 The world is lost in happy dreams.
 The singing time is past and over,
 Dead and forgotten and far away;
 The larks that nested among the clover
 Are fallen silent this many a day;
 In this land of green and gold,
 Of drowsy silence nought can break—
 Save when at eve the unresting crake
 His harsh dull tale, so oft retold,
 Sends through the meadows here and there—
 Not Love himself would strive to sing.
 There is a season for despair,
 There is a season to rejoice;
 Never was lover but loved in spring,
 Never was season but found a voice
 Save this still season, when Desire
 Seems to have dimmed his deathless fire
 And slaked his ever-living thirst.
 For us is neither best nor worst,
 No thought of past or future haunts us;
 Spring and summer are dim as dreams,
 No dread of long dark winter daunts us.
 We, who have drunk of purple streams,
 We, who amid the golden grain
 Have watched the silver sickles swing,
 Care not what any seasons bring.
 We hear the creaking of the wain,

And life and death and hope and fear
And all the pageant of the year
Are less, to our sun-smitten eyes,
Than are the gnats that sink and rise,
Dancing upon the tremulous air ;
Are less to us than gossamer,
Far-floating, very frail and fair,
On softest winds that as they pass
Along the slender, feathered grass
Set all its swaying gold astir ;
Are less than to our listless ears
Is the long, thin, unbroken drone
Of the striped fly upon the stone,
Which sounds to him who heedless hears
Like fairy pipings far away,
In lands where come nor joy nor sorrow,
Nor any thought of yesterday,
Nor any hoping for to-morrow.

And surely in a place like this,
On such a day as this, men see
With suddenly enlightened eyes
The enchanted realms of Faërie,
Where fair Titania bends to kiss
The shaggy ass's head that lies
Pillowed upon no earthly flowers ;
Where years are days and days are hours ;
Where never the spell-bound souls remember
Hope undying or dead regret,
June rose-wreathèd or white December,
Days that darken and suns that set,
Since first they heard the music sweet
And, gazing, felt the wondrous change
As this substantial world, grown strange,
Melted like mist about their feet.
Ev'n now for us, gazing like them,
A sudden glamour filled the day,
And for one moment's breathless space
Upon the very verge we lay
Of some enchanted fairy place,
Where she, so long unseen of men,
Had slipped, at last, into our ken.

We might have touched her garment's hem
And looked upon her deathless face,
But from behind the thorny stem
Of a great purple thistle broke
A landrail's harsh, unlovely call,
And lo ! the happy fairy folk
Whom we had almost seen and heard,
Startled and scared, were scattered all ;
And we, driven back by that dull bird
From the long-vanished, nameless land,
Looked silent in each other's eyes
With thoughts unspeakable ; even so
May our first parents, long ago,
Have looked, when with his flaming brand
An angel barred their Paradise.

DUNCAN J. ROBERTSON.

The Cloud that Passed.

THEY were only three in the compartment as the train sped southwards over the great plain of Northern Italy—the husband, the wife, and the Frenchman.

The lady sat in the right-hand corner facing the engine, gazing out on the sun-bathed landscape as if she dreaded to miss the minutest detail of the scenery. In her cheeks was the rosy flush of morning; in her blue eyes the reflection of the sky of Italy—that sky whose radiant intensity of blue seems to be the expression to the eye of youth and poetry and passion. Her heart beat high within her; it seemed to her as if, for the first time in her eight-and-thirty years, she knew the joy of drawing a long breath.

George Lamont, her husband, looking up at her from the pages of the inevitable 'Bædeker,' could hardly believe that this radiant creature was the placid, sedate wife who, for the last ten years, had darned his socks, and sewed on his buttons, and ordered the small household in the tiny brick-built house at Hackney. Bewildered by the strangeness of everything, oppressed by a sense of responsibility which his narrow life had hardly prepared him to bear easily, he could not share in her exhilaration. With a puzzled sigh he turned away his eyes from her face; but ere he could lower them over his book again, they were arrested by the look on the face of the Frenchman who was sitting opposite her—a look of undisguised, and, as George said to himself, almost insulting, admiration. It was with a clouded brow that he once more bent over his 'Bædeker.'

Presently he was aroused by a question from his wife.

'George,' she was saying, 'tell me, wasn't it Cæsar who fought the battle of Pavia, or was it Napoleon?'

She spoke in a dreamy tone, in which there was no trace of *mauvaise honte*. She knew that the names of both those great

generals were associated with the plains of Northern Italy; and as to the question of *time*—well, she had been only four-and-twenty hours in Italy, but already she had begun to feel, as we all do in that land of history, a sense of the insignificance of time, which seems to bring the events of twice ten hundred years ago as near to us as those from which we are not yet separated by a century.

George coughed in an embarrassed way. He was a hard-working, studious man, but his studies were all directed along one narrow line; he was a specialist in zoology, and his days were spent in researches as to the nature and habits of what Priscilla, his wife, called 'little beasts,' and in giving lectures at South Kensington.

'Cæsar!' he exclaimed, to gain time, while he endeavoured surreptitiously to turn up his 'Bædeker.' 'I think you are going rather too far back, Priscilla!'

The Frenchman anticipated 'Bædeker.'

'Perhaps Madame means the battle in which Francis I. was taken prisoner?' he suggested in tolerably good English.

Nothing could have been less intrusive or more respectful than his manner; but a dark flush of anger rose in George Lamont's pale student's face as he sank back in his seat and buried himself deeper than ever in his guide-books. He had noted that the Frenchman had kept stroking his moustache for some seconds, and he had seemed to catch a glimpse of a mocking smile in the corners of what he chose to call to himself 'the fellow's wicked eyes'—only he qualified the noun with another and stronger adjective which it is usually forbidden to set down in writing. As he sat with head bent over his books, inwardly cursing all 'foreigners,' and this Frenchman in particular, the cloud which was to darken the sky of husband and wife was gathering and spreading. His responses to Priscilla's rapturous ejaculations became gradually shorter and drier; and when, in the fullness of her heart, she stretched out her hand towards him behind the screen afforded by a pile of books lying on the seat between them, he did not condescend to see it.

As she hurriedly drew it back, Priscilla's eyes fell for an instant on the Frenchman's face, and the expression in it told her that he had seen both the overture and the repulse. The warm blood mounted high in her cheeks; then she turned towards the window, and became apparently more than ever interested in the scene outside. When her husband looked up a few minutes

later, he almost gnashed his teeth to see how near the two heads were to each other, as Priscilla and the Frenchman, from their respective corners, leaned towards the window, while the latter pointed out innumerable objects of interest, and volubly imparted information, the truth of which George very much suspected.

He endured in silence as long as he could, and when the desire to speak became overmastering, he made a valiant attempt to convict the Frenchman out of the mouth of 'Bædeker.'

'O, "Bædeker"! ' was the contemptuous reply, accompanied by a wave of the hand and a shrug of the shoulders that seemed to dispose of the faithful guide. 'The devotion of you other English to "Bædeker" is truly wonderful! But, *enfin*, the worthy German is only mortal like us others.'

Once more George was driven to take refuge in his books.

Meanwhile, the scene outside was changing: the great plain was rapidly disappearing, while from east and west low hills, covered with a parched brown growth, seemed to be drawing ever closer together, as if they sought to bar the journey southwards. Soon, on right and left, they sloped down to the railway line, clothed here and there with plantations of lemon trees. Priscilla gave a little cry of delight as she caught sight of the yellow fruit amid the glossy green leaves.

'Ah, yes, we are in the land of the lemon tree now!' said the Frenchman, with his politely indulgent smile.

The train rattled noisily on—along a bridge across a dried-up river with the stones of its bed showing white and parched in the hot sunshine; past a small town, whose tall houses of time-mellowed, sun-baked stone struggled up the hillsides amid the dark green leaves of the lemon, and the greyish foliage of the olive. On the steps of one of the houses some half a dozen brown roguish-faced children in picturesque rags were playing, while on the balcony of another a woman with a gaudy square-shaped headdress, and bright-coloured beads, was leaning over the stone rail. They were so like what she had seen hundreds of times in pictures, but never before in life, that Priscilla found it impossible to believe that they were not the creations of the artist.

'Oh,' she cried with a little gasp, 'they can't be real!'

The Frenchman laughed good-humouredly.

'Madame would find them but too real,' he said, 'if she would throw among them one copper piece! These other Italians are but picturesque beggars and thieves—Pah!' He

shrugged his shoulders, and snapped his fingers with an air of infinite disgust

Priscilla sighed gently, as she continued to gaze out of the window, though, it must be confessed, with a lessening interest. The fresh glory of the morning had departed, alike from her heart and from the landscape; she began to be unpleasantly conscious of the heat of the midday sun, and of the parched, dry look of the scrubby, irregular hills; she gradually became aware of the sameness and monotony of the scene, and ceased to feel its novelty—more scrubby hills, more lemon trees, more sun-baked houses, with picturesque, ragged children playing on the steps, and picturesque peasant women leaning over railings, more dried-up streams with the white stones showing in their beds. She sighed again.

‘If Madame would permit that the blind be lowered?’ the Frenchman suggested respectfully. For in her eagerness to see Priscilla still kept her blind drawn up, though the sun was beginning to shine in at the window.

Before Priscilla could reply, George broke in.

‘Go over to the other corner,’ he said; ‘you will be out of the sun there.’

His tone was sharp and authoritative. Priscilla could not but resent it, smarting as she still was from the recollection of the repulse which she had suffered from him already in the course of the morning’s journey.

‘Thank you,’ she said with a little air of quiet dignity, ‘but I think I shall stay here. The sea will be on this side.’

‘As you like,’ George replied ungraciously, ‘but I shall get out of this sweltering sun any way.’ And, rising, he removed the bag in the rack above his head to the corner of the compartment farthest from that in which his wife was sitting.

Priscilla had asserted herself, but she did not seem to be happy. She shifted uneasily in her seat, and uttered a half-suppressed sigh. Her glance strayed towards her husband in his remote corner, but was arrested in passing by the look on the Frenchman’s face—a look of gratified vanity. That look settled the question.

‘After all, I think I shall go over there,’ she said, as she rose from her seat. ‘It is getting very hot here.’

If the Frenchman felt any disappointment he did not show it.

‘Madame is wise,’ he said approvingly, springing with alacrity to his feet in order to remove her belongings to the other corner,

'I, too, commence to suffer here from the heat, and it is well that we take now the places which we wish to keep, for this *coupé* will not long rest to us three alone.'

'We are coming to a station then?' queried Priscilla, who had now seated herself opposite her husband.

'We approach the "City of Palaces,"' replied the Frenchman, as he removed his possessions, and took a seat beside her. 'We approach Gênes—Genova—how do you other English call it?—Ah, yes, Genoa! And there find themselves there always many travellers—ah, but many!' He gave an expressive shrug of his shoulders.

George looked up from his books with an air of importance and self-satisfaction. He felt that in changing her seat his wife had acknowledged his authority, and yielded a fitting obedience to it, and he consequently felt pleased with himself and with her.

'We shall lunch at Genoa,' he said in a tone of decision, which was intended to show the Frenchman that he was master of the situation. 'We have twenty minutes there.'

Priscilla, whose face was turned towards the window, said nothing. Gentle though she was, she felt inclined to resent her husband's little air of ownership and authority, and to half regret the concession she had made in changing her seat.

The Frenchman smiled that half-pitying, half-patronising smile of his which George found so irritating.

'Monsieur has perhaps travelled to Genoa before by this train?' he queried.

George admitted that he was making the journey for the first time; but there was something in his tone and manner that seemed to say that he knew what he was about, and would not accept advice from anyone. So, at least, the Frenchman interpreted it. With a softly ejaculated 'Ah!' he threw himself back in his seat and gently stroked his moustache.

Even this apparently inoffensive exclamation, however, proved irritating to George, as was evident from the increased dignity and self-sufficiency of his bearing, as he proceeded to fold up his maps and shut his books.

The train was entering the outskirts of the 'City of Palaces'; on either side of the line houses began to appear; gradually they became more and more numerous, and soon the view on the right, where the ground sloped down to the sea, was a confused jumble of roofs and chimneys, with the masts of shipping in the background; while on the left, large square stone houses, with an air

of solidity and dignity about them, struggled up the hillside amid lemon and orange trees. Then, with a shrill whistle, the houses and lemon trees gave place to the walls of the commonplace modern railway station.

As the train drew up at the platform, George rose with a business-like air; but his heart sank within him as his eyes fell on the confused crowd of people of every nation of Europe, all excitedly rushing about and elbowing each other. There were stout Germans of both sexes in nondescript garments, with blue spectacles and opera-glasses; there was the omnipresent American girl in checked tartan, talking volubly to her insignificant male companion; there was the invariable group of English women of uncertain age, standing erect and dignified amid the general excitement, with their wonted air of propriety and proprietorship, calling aloud with correct English accent, '*Facchino! Facchino!*' There were neat little Frenchmen in new tourist costumes, in which they did not seem to feel quite at home, running about in an aimless way, knocking up against everyone, and perpetually taking off their straw hats and murmuring distractedly, '*Pardon!*' and here, and there, there was a picturesque *contadina*, with a *bambino* in one arm and a bundle in the other, looking bewildered and apologetic, as if she knew she had no right to be there.

As George stepped out on to the platform, there was a sudden rush on his compartment, and it seemed to him that he was surrounded by a dozen excited women, all pushing against him and shouting in as many different languages. The general excitement proved infectious; in an instant his calm dignity deserted him, and he, too, was wildly shouting and gesticulating like the rest.

'*Posti pren—prenduti!*' he cried in the best Italian at his command, which might perhaps be Englished 'Places tooked,' while he endeavoured with his spare person to stem the torrent bearing down on the compartment.

In spite of his exertions, however, two active business-like German women of uncertain age succeeded in making their way into the compartment, and actually began to remove the roll of rugs which he had laid on his seat.

George's agitation increased, and his face became white and drawn. '*Mio posto, mio posto!*' (my place) he cried in a tone of breathless excitement.

But the ladies paid no attention to him; and the Frenchman, suppressing a smile, came to the rescue. Politely raising his hat,

he explained, in his own language, which appeared to be intelligible to the ladies, that three seats in the compartment were already engaged. George could not but thank him for his assistance; but his manner of doing so was rather lacking in graciousness, and Priscilla thought it necessary to make up for his coldness by throwing more warmth into her bow and murmured, 'Thanks!' than she would otherwise have done.

'Monsieur sees that it is dangerous to descend here all the three,' remarked the Frenchman. 'One must remain to guard the places. If Monsieur will permit, I will conduct Madame to the *buffet*, and then afterwards Monsieur——'

But here Priscilla, who had cast a look in George's face, quietly interposed.

'I will stay here with my husband till Monsieur returns,' she said.

'As Madame will.' And the Frenchman raised his hat and moved away.

His departure was the signal for a fresh onset on the compartment, and George, who was momentarily becoming more agitated and nervous, felt scarcely able to maintain the defence against the bombardment of Gladstone bags, cardboard boxes, paper parcels, hold-alls, and canvas-covered portmanteaus. Fortunately, the two German ladies, who had now secured their seats, proved most effective assistants, and after the first rush was over, he was able to leave the defence in their hands. But already ten of the precious twenty minutes had slipped away.

'Come quick!' he said in an excited, flustered tone of voice, as he drew Priscilla's arm through his own, and hurried her along the crowded platform. 'We have scarcely time to get anything to eat.'

If the platform was crowded, the refreshment room was even more so. Glancing round the tables, Priscilla saw only one seat vacant.

'Yes, beside that French fellow!' George remarked surlily, when she pointed it out to him. 'You may take it if you like.'

Priscilla drew herself up with a little air of wounded dignity; she felt that her husband was carrying his unreasonableness too far.

'Well, then, I *will* take it,' she said quietly, as she moved across the room to the unoccupied seat.

The Frenchman beckoned to a waiter, and in a few seconds a plate of soup was smoking before her on the table. Hungry

though she was, however, she was quite unable to eat. Her eyes strayed anxiously towards George, who was making frantic efforts to make himself understood, and to get what he wanted, laying hold eagerly of every waiter who passed him, and being politely shaken off with a hurried '*Subito, subito!*' She heaved a little sigh, and glanced at the Frenchman's plate. It was empty. Then she looked up into his face. He too was watching George, and there was a smile on his lips—a mocking, malicious smile it seemed to her.

'Monsieur has already finished?' she said interrogatively, with a slight tone of reproach in her voice.

'Ah, true!' he exclaimed, 'I had forgot. I will resign my place to Monsieur, your husband.' And he rose from the table and moved away.

George did not show the gratitude that might have been expected of him.

'D—— that Frenchman!' were the first words he uttered, as he slipped into the seat just vacated beside his wife.

'It seems to me that he has made himself very useful,' said Priscilla quietly.

'It seems to *me*,' retorted her husband surlily—'it seems to me that you have made friends with him pretty quickly.'

He was really not a bad-tempered man as men go, but he had the nervous irritability of the man whose days are spent indoors with books, and the unwonted fatigue, excitement and anxiety had proved altogether too much for him.

'George!' Priscilla exclaimed, turning her blue eyes full upon him with that look of indignant innocence in them which only blue eyes can show.

'Well!' he muttered sullenly without looking up. And then he scalded himself with a spoonful of soup, and gave expression to his feelings in that word beginning with the letter *D*, which is the usual safety-valve of the irate male.

Priscilla continued to eat her soup in dignified silence; and for a few minutes no word was spoken between the two. The cloud which had been a mere speck on the horizon so short a while before was now threatening to darken the whole sky of husband and wife. Suddenly George sprang to his feet with an exclamation of alarm. Outside, a bell was ringing loudly.

'I believe that's our train,' he panted excitedly. 'Come, quick!'

Leaving their plates of soup unfinished, the two fled out of the

restaurant and along the platform, amid the ringing of bells, the shrieking of engines, and the angry shouts of guards. The Frenchman was watching for them, with the door of their compartment held open, and they had just time to sink panting into their seats when '*Pronti!*' was roared out in a stentorian voice, and the train began to move.

'I fear that Monsieur and Madame did not find time enough to eat their meal,' said the Frenchman in a friendly way, as the train emerged into the sunlight from the tunnel which it enters on leaving the station. Then he reached up to the rack over his head, and took thence a parcel in clean white paper. 'I supplied myself in case of need,' he said, as he unfolded the parcel, displaying a small roast chicken neatly carved into four pieces, two rolls, and a small packet of salt. 'If Monsieur will do me the honour to accept this, or to purchase it? It is at the service of Monsieur.'

George declined the offer as graciously as it was possible for him to do in his state of mind.

'But, Madame?' said the Frenchman, looking towards Priscilla. 'Perhaps Madame will eat of it?'

Poor Priscilla! The few mouthfuls of soup which she had eaten had only been sufficient to make her realise that she was hungry, and the food offered to her looked very tempting in its clean white cover; but one glance at her husband's face showed her the necessity of declining.

'We shall be able to get something at Pisa,' George said to her, his amiability returning in reward for the consideration which she had shown for his wishes.

But Priscilla was not much inclined to be amiable. She had made the sacrifice of her own inclinations to her husband's ill humour; but she could not help feeling that she should not have been called upon to make it. She gave a little sigh as she leaned back in her corner, and slowly ate the roll which she had brought with her from the restaurant. There are women who can humour their husbands as if they were fractious children without any loss of wifely esteem and affection; there are others who wish to admire where they love, to whom each instance of weak tyranny, each fit of childish ill humour on the part of their husbands is a wound in the heart. Priscilla belonged to the latter class. She would have been willing, for her husband's sake, to suffer almost any privation if it were not demanded of her, but it pained her deeply to find him ready to starve her in a mere fit of temper.

She made no reply to George's remark, but turned her face

towards the window and watched the landscape flying past. But it had quite ceased to interest her as it had done in the morning. She was only conscious of the dusty glare of the afternoon sun, the weary sameness of the narrow strip of dry scorched plain through which the train was now passing, and the endless monotony of the chain of hills beyond on her left. The knowledge that these hills were the Apennines gave her no thrill such as the mere thought that she was looking on the Alps had given her in the morning. Even when, on a touch from George, she turned her head to look through the window on her right, and she knew that the blue sea on which her eyes fell was the Mediterranean, she felt no rapture, no enthusiasm. She was disappointed with herself that she should feel none, at the same time that she was disgusted with the extravagant enthusiasm of the two German ladies, who kept exclaiming in their hard voices at regular intervals, '*Wunderschön, wunderschön!*' between their attempts at making conversation in Italian with the only Italian in the compartment—a modest-looking young woman of the *bourgeois* class, who was evidently not much accustomed to travel, and seemed less at home than any of the foreigners. With that somewhat mercenary spirit which appears to distinguish the German desire for knowledge, the two ladies had, from the moment she entered the compartment, set themselves to make use of the girl as a tutor, and it was evident from the furtive looks of gratification which they threw at each other from time to time that they considered that they were gaining great profit. Each produced from the small leather hand-bag she carried a little cardboard box containing a filigree brooch, presumably bought in Genoa. These they handed to the Italian girl for her inspection, telling her what they had paid for them, and fixing anxious eyes on her face while she examined them.

'*Caro?*' they asked eagerly. '*Non caro!*' and then they nodded and smiled delightedly as they carefully returned the treasures to their receptacles, and resumed their conversation in atrocious Italian.

Priscilla was glad when the next station was reached and the Italian girl alighted from the train. But her departure did not improve matters, for her place in the compartment was at once taken by a large German of the intellectual-machine type—one of those men (to be found only in the Fatherland) who seem capable of doing their daily twelve or fifteen hours' brain work without showing any signs of fatigue. The two ladies hailed

their countryman with effusion, and then the three hard voices went to work with such energy that they seemed to exhaust the air in the compartment. The brooches were again brought out for inspection, and were gravely examined and commented on by the newcomer, maps were spread open, Bædeker was consulted, and all the time the ceaseless stream of talk went on.

The Germans had it all their own way: the Frenchman, since the arrival of the latest comer, had retired behind a newspaper with a scowl on his brow, and George Lamont, whose face was gradually becoming more and more drawn and haggard looking, was chiefly occupied in drawing up the window, as the train entered one of the innumerable tunnels on this part of the line, and in letting it down again.

When Pisa appeared in sight, Priscilla was scarcely capable of feeling even the most languid interest as her eyes rested on the celebrated leaning tower and the great round dome of the cathedral, while her husband, whose whole mind was concentrated on the problem how to secure food for his wife and himself in the five minutes' stop allowed at the station, saw absolutely nothing.

When the station was reached, even before the train came to a halt, George was leaning out of the window beckoning eagerly, his face looking white and tense with excitement and resolution. He had caught a glimpse of one or two men carrying on their heads large flat open baskets containing food of some sort, and he was anxious to attract the attention of one of them. But his signals were unfortunately misunderstood; first there was a rush of porters towards his compartment, thinking he wished to alight; and then, when, after many unintelligible explanations and despairing gesticulations, he had at length got rid of them, he was attacked by a woman selling a small wax model of the leaning tower, who would not be shaken off. It was not till '*Pronti!*' had been roared out in a deep voice of command, and the train was already in motion, that he was able to sink back in his seat gasping and panting, but triumphant, in his hands two rolls containing meat, and a small flask of native wine.

His triumph, however, was short-lived; after a glance at the contents of the roll which he had handed to her, Priscilla sank backwards with a look of sickness and disgust in her face, from which the glow and flush of the morning had departed. George examined the sandwich which he held in his hand, and then laid it down on the seat beside him with a hopeless sigh; hungry

though he was, his national prejudices would not allow him to eat raw bacon and sausage redolent of garlic!

An animated discussion, in which Priscilla caught the words *Schinken* and *Wurst*, now took place between the two German ladies; and then one of them leaned across the carriage towards Priscilla, and offered, in a mixture of broken English and German, to buy the sandwiches. No, no, they would not take them for nothing—they would pay *einen billigen preis*; and she insisted on counting out some coppers into Priscilla's palm.

Then they proceeded to discuss the rejected dainties with evident satisfaction; and, as if fortified thereby, their voices went on louder, more eager, more continuous than ever, while the train rattled along through the endless succession of tunnels through which this part of the line passes.

When the sun had dipped behind the Apennines, and, over in the east, a faint grey haze was beginning to rise, all the three Germans rushed excitedly to the right-hand window, and pointing to a long blue line of distant low hills with a background of hazy sky, cried out with one voice, 'Elba, Elba!' Even Priscilla opened her languid eyes and looked; but the Frenchman turned his face towards the opposite window.

By-and-by, however, he appeared somewhat to recover the amiability which had deserted him since the entrance of the Germans. Reaching up for the white paper parcel in the rack above him, he began to make his evening meal with a cheerful air of enjoyment.

'Let me counsel you,' he said with good-humoured politeness, 'to buy only, in this country of barbarians, the fowl and the eggs of the fowl. That is all they have of good.'

'D—the fellow!' George Lamont muttered to himself, as he turned his face to the window, unable to endure the sight of the other's enjoyment, which he chose to consider malicious and insulting. For a mild scholarly man such as he, it was astonishing how often in the course of the day he had felt compelled to relieve his feelings by the use of strong language.

Meantime the grey of evening was creeping over the landscape, and a little chill breeze began to steal in at the window. George and Priscilla, sunk in their corners, were rapidly settling down into a state of listless semi-consciousness due to ten hours of continuous travelling and want of food; and they did not notice the rush of passengers towards the front of the train which began to take place at every station at which they stopped. At

length, at one stoppage, the chance remark of some Englishman hurrying past the compartment aroused George.

'Why, there is evidently a dining saloon on the train!' he exclaimed, as he started to his feet with sudden energy. 'I shall go and secure places. Wait till I come back!' And springing out he quickly disappeared among the rushing, eager crowd of stout Germans, slender Americans, and stiff English.

Priscilla rose and leaned out of the window, watching for her husband's return; but the grey of the evening had now almost deepened into the darkness of night, and she could only see a few yards ahead of her. Suddenly she felt a light touch on her arm, and, turning her head, she saw the Frenchman beside her.

'If Madame would accept my counsel and permit me to conduct her to the *salle à diner*?' he said interrogatively. 'It will not be possible that Monsieur secure places for two—look!' And he waved his hand expressively towards the crowd outside still hurrying eagerly forward.

She shook her head: she would wait for her husband, she said. But as the seconds passed, and still George did not return, she suffered herself to be persuaded. The Frenchman helped her to alight, and they made their way along the platform, slowly, for Priscilla's limbs were stiff and trembling. When they reached the dining saloon, they found the door shut, and an unfeeling official standing on the step waving off a small crowd of eager, hungry people, for whom there were no seats.

'Too late!' exclaimed the Frenchman, with a shrug of his shoulders.

'And—and my husband?' Priscilla gasped. 'Where is he?'

'Shut in the *coupé* eating a good dinner,' was the reply in a contemptuous tone, as the two turned and moved slowly back along the platform.

A sense of desolation swept over Priscilla in her weakness and exhaustion; tears welled up into her eyes—tears of utter physical helplessness. She stumbled and tottered. The Frenchman seized her hand, and drew it through his arm.

'*Nous voici*!' he exclaimed, as he flung open the door of a compartment.

But there was something in his tone which somehow frightened her. She cast a hasty glance into the empty compartment, and drew away her hand from his arm. 'This is not our carriage,' she exclaimed, and then hurried along the platform with the fictitious strength of fear.

The large German was leaning out of the window of the compartment which she had lately quitted. He flung open the door, and she sank gasping and palpitating into her corner. The Frenchman followed, and took his seat with his usual air of polite indifference just as the train moved off.

Priscilla buried her face in her corner that his supercilious gaze might not fall upon the tears which she could not restrain. From head to foot her whole body shook as with ague, her heart was fluttering with fear, and bitter with resentment against her husband for having exposed her to—he knew not what. Gradually a black darkness seemed to be settling down upon her, which she felt she must struggle against because of something—some shapeless terror—which haunted her. When at length the train stopped at a station, and she heard her husband's voice eagerly calling her by name, the strain gave way, the black darkness closed in upon her, and she knew no more.

As he saw his wife sink back fainting into her corner, George Lamont was seized with a sudden terror. He had never seen her faint before, and he was helplessly ignorant as to what ought to be done. Of course he did the worst thing possible: raising up the unconscious figure of his wife, he seated himself in the corner of the carriage, and laid her head upon his shoulder. Stunned and stupefied as he was, he did not hear the directions called out to him by the large German in a miscellaneous confusion of languages.

'Nieder, nieder—à bas la tête—la testa giù !'

Then the large German rose, and crossing the compartment, he took the unconscious Priscilla from her husband's arms, and laid her along the seat, gently, but with an air of scientific precision.

'The head must low laid be,' he said, as he searched among his possessions, and produced a smelling bottle and a brandy flask. These he made use of with such good effect that, in a few minutes, George had the joy of seeing his wife once more open her eyes, and cast a languid, bewildered look round the compartment.

'She haf need to eat,' said the large German, as he again rummaged in his bag, producing thence a small tin of meat extract and a bone spoon. *'She haf too long starved. You must her to eat give when we to Orbetello come, where we a halt of twenty minutes haf will.'*

Priscilla thanked him in a feeble voice, as she swallowed the

somewhat unpalatable spoonful which he held to her lips. As for George, he sank back in his seat, overwhelmed with a sudden bitter sense of remorse and humiliation awakened by the German's last remark. He had starved his wife—he who had solemnly promised to love and cherish her! As in a flash of revelation, he seemed to see all at once how selfish he had been in his absorption in his 'little beasts,' how little thought he had given to the vows which he had made, the duties which he had taken upon him ten years before.

When Orbetello was reached, he sprang to his feet with an air of purpose and resolve, which to anyone who had lived a less narrow and unpractical life than he, would have appeared strangely above the occasion. With unwonted tenderness, he helped Priscilla to alight, and, placing his arm round her, supported her to the restaurant, where he found a seat for her at the long table in the centre of the room. The table was laid out with knives and forks and serviettes, and bore in the centre a large card with the words '*Pranzo, tre lire*' (Dinner, three francs); but George did not notice that, or, if he did, he attached no meaning to it. He fought his way through the crowd, who appeared to be shouting at the pitch of their voices in every language of Europe, to the *buffet*, his whole mind and soul concentrated on his errand. Remembering the advice of the Frenchman, he managed, after a struggle with the language, to secure a chicken in a white paper parcel, and this he bore in triumph to his wife.

'There!' he exclaimed in breathless excitement, as he laid the precious parcel on the table before her. 'I am afraid you will have to be very quick, dear, as there is not much time.'

As Priscilla opened the parcel, and was looking in a helpless, bewildered way, not knowing very well what to do with it, a waiter, seeing the symmetry of his dinner-table destroyed by that unsightly object, suddenly snatched it up and bore it away. For an instant or two George stood gazing at the man, speechless and aghast. Then he suddenly gathered himself together—he could not stand by and see the cup dashed from the lips of his half-starved wife for the third time! With a white and tragic-looking face, in which there was withal an air of resolution, he hurried after the man, and laid a nervous, frantic grasp on his shoulders. In his agitation, he forgot every word of Italian which he had learned from his dialogue book.

'*Bought that!*' he roared into the waiter's ears in a voice that shook with emotion—'*Bought that!*'

The large German, who had witnessed the little scene, came to the rescue, and explained that the man was only carrying the parcel to a side table. The German it was, and not her husband, who after all took care that Priscilla's wants were attended to, ordering a plate and knife and fork to be brought for her to the side table, and seeing that she had all that she required. As for George, he had fled out into the night in an agony of shame and mortification; and as he strode up and down the platform with feverish steps, he was having it out with himself—fighting his way through the darkness of humiliation to that bitterest of all knowledge, the knowledge of one's own faults and weaknesses.

His wife, who had no clue to his state of mind, was somewhat hurt at his desertion of her. As her physical needs were satisfied, and her strength in some measure returned to her, a sense of soreness and bitterness stole over her. It was hard to think that it was to strangers, rather than to her own husband, that she was indebted for what little attention to her comforts she had that day received. Faithful wife though she was, when she once more found herself in her corner rattling along through the deepening gloom, the contrast between what was and what ought to be would keep forcing itself on her mind, and visions of the Ideal Man, who is the object of every true woman's secret worship, would keep rising before her—the man who is strong and brave, yet tender, large-hearted, broad-minded, prepared to meet every danger and difficulty that may arise. She gave a little sigh, and then turned her eyes from the window, through which she had been looking out on the night, towards her husband sitting huddled together in his corner, his whole figure limp and drooping, his face looking haggard and wan in the feeble light of the flickering lamp overhead. And, as she looked, pity awoke within her—pity which a wise Providence has made to take the place in the hearts of women of that admiration which, save in a few cases, it is denied them to feel. A sudden rush of tenderness swept over her, blotting out all recollection of her little grievances, all perception of her husband's faults. He might not be ideal, but he was *real*, which after all was perhaps better; he was *hers*, and he was suffering.

'George,' she said affectionately, leaning across the carriage towards him—'George, you look very tired; put up your feet here,' and she made a space on the seat beside her, heedless of the supercilious looks of the Frenchman.

But George only shook his head mournfully. Again Priscilla leaned across the carriage, and this time she took her husband's hand in both her own, while the Frenchman muttered to himself, with a shrug of his shoulders, '*Qu'elles sont folles, ces femmes !*'

'What is the matter?' she asked in a gentle whisper. 'I know there is something the matter. Tell me!'

He turned his eyes upon her with a humble admiring look in them.

'Priscilla,' he said, 'you—you are——' and then he turned away his head and said no more.

But Priscilla understood. It was now nearing midnight, and outside the gloom had deepened to blackness, but from the heart of husband and wife the cloud which had darkened their day had passed away. In spite of the fatigue which she had undergone, something of the glitter of morning returned to Priscilla's eyes, something of its glow to her cheeks.

'The Tiber! Oh, George, *the Tiber!*' she cried, breathless with a sort of awestruck eagerness, as the train swept past a stretch of dark, glittering water, dotted with the lights of boats.

An atmosphere of excitement seemed to spread itself suddenly through the compartment, leaving the Frenchman alone unaffected. The Germans ran eagerly from window to window, each anxious to catch the first glimpse of the lights of the Eternal City. George sprang to his feet with a new air of strength and purpose about him, and began to make preparations for the arrival, while the Frenchman, with a look of languid, cynical indifference, rose slowly from his seat and took down his bag from the rack. There were glimpses of black walls and tall houses, then a shriek from the engine, a rush and rattle and rumble, the lights of a station, and the shouts of guards and porters.

Priscilla caught her breath and lightly pressed her husband's hand, while her heart beat high within her, for amid the confused medley of shouts and cries her quick ear had detected the magical name, 'Roma, Roma!'

AMELIA HUTCHISON STIRLING.

A Retrospect and a Forecast.

THIS is a time of reviews—of looking back and looking forward, and it seems to many that in nothing has the change for the better been so remarkable as in that which has taken place in regard to the ideals of women's life and work, educational, social, religious. We cannot expect to find on earth good quite unmixed with evil, yet in the great movement to develop to the highest the intellectual powers which God has given them, in the desire to turn this to account for the common good, and to be fellow-workers in the Church, I think there has been such an immense preponderance of good, that I greatly rejoice and look forward to better and higher developments in the future. To some of these I desire to call attention in the following article.

Let me begin by surveying the territory already won.

It is just fifty years ago, that the project of opening a college for women was first formed by a few earnest men, chiefly professors at King's College, amongst whom Frederick Maurice was the leading spirit. The work had been initiated before, by the opening of examinations for governesses; on finding how miserably educated the teachers were, free evening classes had been formed, but in the spring of 1848 a college was definitely established for those who could pay, and I attended the opening lectures. Our Queen was one of the first to give it her name and support, and to found a scholarship.

When my education began, towards the end of the thirties, there were no day schools, except for the children of the poor. The daughters of the professional classes had their private governesses, supplemented by masters, and perhaps at the end were sent 'to finish' at a school in London. Many, like Miss Austen's heroines, had to pick up the most meagre and unsystematic knowledge, and books were not easily obtained; circulating libraries scarcely had come into existence, so one was

nearly dependent on the books possessed by each family. Thus my sisters and I had resident governesses who were supposed to undertake English and French and were assisted by masters and mistresses for other subjects. After a time we were sent to a boarding school. Being obliged to leave from ill health I was allowed, after fourteen, to follow to a considerable extent my own devices, and I took up the course of study pursued by my brothers at Merchant Taylors, learning as they did the doggerel verse and irrational rules of the Eton Latin Grammar, sharing the lessons of their classical private coach, and teaching myself Euclid and algebra whilst helping them. I gained thus a somewhat intimate knowledge of the kind of teaching given in a school which had a high reputation.

This course was interrupted by a brief sojourn in a finishing school kept by English ladies in the Champs Elysées, where I saw a system excellent as regards organisation, but intellectually of a nature to induce atrophy of the thinking powers, whilst giving constant occupation in learning 'words, words, words.'

The revolution of 1848 cut short this experience, and we returned just as Queen's College was opening. We had the great happiness of finding that some of the leaders of thought would condescend to teach girls—Professors Maurice, Brewer, Trench, Plumptre, Goodeve, Brasseur, Bernays, Sterndale Bennett, and others. I took examinations in the various subjects I had studied, and for the first time was able to obtain instruction in mathematics, which were not then taught to girls. I had already gone through the six books of Euclid and some algebra alone. After a time I was appointed Mathematical Tutor, and later Latin Tutor, receiving in exchange private coaching in my favourite study, so that I was able to take up the higher branches, conics and the differential calculus. I also studied with special zeal and delight Greek and mental philosophy under Mr. Plumptre, subsequently Dean of Wells, and the translator of *Æschylus* and *Sophocles*. Greek was at that time so little the fashion, that the small class of about six soon dwindled to two, and after two terms more it ceased to exist. I was appointed Latin Tutor and continued my classics at home. My vacations were spent in study or in foreign travel, and I visited schools in Germany and Switzerland. After seven years' teaching at Queen's, I gained a new kind of experience.

In 1857 I accepted the post of head teacher in a large school

for clergymen's daughters at Casterton, which is better known as the school of Jane Eyre. It had doubtless changed much for the better since she was there, but still it greatly needed reform. At Queen's the teaching had been almost exclusively by masters; here it was altogether by mistresses. We lived a life as secluded as if we were in a convent; scarcely did the echoes from the outer world reach us. Each class teacher had to instruct in nearly everything, and the head teacher was weighed down by the multiplicity of her duties and her many anxieties. Still the year there was a most valuable training for the work which I next took up, and which has occupied all my mind and heart since 1858.

At the beginning of that time Queen's College, Bedford College, and the day school, founded by Miss Buss, afterwards called the North London Collegiate School, and the Ladies' College, Cheltenham (the first proprietary college for girls), were the only collegiate schools existing. The prejudice against the higher education of girls was in full force in country places, and was only dying out in London. Examinations for girls were considered most dangerous as tending to destroy their health, and to 'turn them into boys,' and it was thought an extraordinary proceeding when in 1863 we invited examiners from Oxford to test our work.

The Commission of 1864-68 opened people's eyes to the miserably unsatisfactory state of girls' education. I gave evidence and afterwards abridged and edited the Blue Books as far as they related to girls. After the Commission had published their report progress was rapid. In 1869 Cambridge and London opened examinations for women. In 1871 Mrs. William Grey established the Women's Educational Union, out of which grew the G.P.D.S. Co., and at the same time Endowed Schools were opened in many places, and the great North London School, under Miss Buss, was placed on a permanent basis.

Quite marvellous has been the effect of the movement begun by Mrs. Grey and her lamented sister, Miss Shirreff. There are now no important towns without their well-appointed and well-taught high schools. In 1871 the first of the Women's Colleges was opened near Cambridge through the exertions of Miss Emily Davies. In 1879 the London University admitted women to degrees, and the example of London has been followed by nearly all universities. It was not until three years later,

1882, that the battle, in which Mrs. Garrett Anderson was the leader, was finally won, and London offered medical degrees to women.

In a short article one cannot speak in detail of the successive developments; of the first opening of the profession of a nurse; of the great battle for medical education; of the multiplication of women's Colleges at the Universities, and of mixed Colleges which stand in no direct relation to any one university; of the development of philanthropic agencies, religious and secular; at the end of half a century we find a great and beneficent change has passed over the intellectual life of women, and also over their moral and social ideas, we recognise the truth that

Heaven doth to us as we with torches do,
Not light them for themselves.

We see women who move in the highest social circles now taking posts as heads of colleges and high schools, and of hospitals; others as doctors, teachers, nurses, engaged in all sorts of philanthropic work, serving under Government as secretaries or clerks in the Bank of England and in the Post Office. Greater still has been the indirect effect of the higher education of women in setting up higher ideals.

The Conferences of Women Workers make one full of hope, spite of the evils that have been brought to light. Much earnest work is being done by lady Guardians, lady Inspectors, by those who are engaged in Mission work at home and abroad, to say nothing of those who as Deaconesses and Sisters, or in Settlements, are living a life of devotion. These and many others are taking up work in no dilettanti spirit, and though there are some to whom 'slumming' is a fashion and philanthropy an amusement, there are many more who are working in the spirit of the Master, laying down their lives that they may take them again quickened by the life of God, and so be able to raise others out of the darkness.

But though we may survey the past with thankfulness and the future with hope, there is no reason for satisfaction. There is much still to be done if we are to send out a succession of really efficient, systematic, well-trained workers able to undertake all the intellectual and social work which offers.

First, as regards the intellectual training. It would be incredible, unless we had the proof, how miserably inefficient is the teaching of many, not only of the poor, but of the classes who

can afford high payments for teaching. Take a subject that all girls begin early—viz. French. I have hundreds of papers written by girls, entering over twelve years of age. There is not one in ten who can write correctly the regular conjugations, or who can indite quite simple sentences without egregious errors. Arithmetic has improved of late years more than any subject, but still the most clumsy methods constantly appear.

The power of attention to subjects which are unexciting seems to have been almost destroyed in many cases by the unlimited indulgence in sensational and worthless literature, and real mental application rendered almost impossible. The distracting number of subjects learned and the shortening hours render the task of the teacher one of increasing difficulty. Some of the most pressing reforms still needed are perhaps the following:—

- (1) The organisation of schools.
- (2) The registration of teachers so that they may form a definite profession and act together.
- (3) The systematic training of teachers so that they may economise time, and not waste the energies of their pupils, but give such education in 'music and gymnastic,' to use Plato's words, as will refine and invigorate.

This last seems to me of supreme importance, not only directly but indirectly. Not only because a teacher who works on scientific methods produces better results, but because work done in a right way gives joy and health to the teacher and the taught. If in England we had more who would give themselves to the real study of education with the zeal of a Fröbel, a Pestalozzi, a Comenius, a Herbart, an enthusiasm for the work of education would be felt which is now rarely the case, a joy such as the musician or the artist feels in his work. We do not hear them say, 'I get away from my work; throw it all off in holidays.' The real teacher should find his reward, his 'meat,' the sustenance of his higher life, in his work.

Give him the wages of going on and not to stop.

With improved systems of teaching in our ordinary schools there would be much greater economy of time, and the power of attention would be so much increased that three or four languages would be learned in the time now required for one. Parallel grammars might be used, and only the varieties, the differentia in different languages, studied; if the foundation of arithmetic and

mathematics were securely laid on principles, not mere rules, the building up would be quickly and safely accomplished. Truth in such a Utopia would be sought for its own sake, for the perfection of man, individual, social, temporal and eternal.

Doubtless great progress has been made. I look back to the time when in 1877 Miss Newman began here on a small scale, what was, I believe, the first training college for ladies who desired to become teachers in secondary schools. Now there are an increasing number of training colleges, besides day training colleges associated with university colleges. Head mistresses insist on teachers' certificates, but, alas, still only a few men consider that professional education is needed except by elementary teachers, and schools suffer in consequence.

But I must not wander from my subject; we are speaking of the training of women for professional work, and there are two special directions which I hope this will take.

We have all seen the wonderfully good result of Miss Nightingale's action in submitting to training as a nurse herself, and organising from her sick bed such training for others. Once it was considered *infra dig.* for a lady to nurse the sick out of their own homes, and hospitals and workhouses were left to Mrs. Gamps.

There are, happily, an increasing number of girls who go through the courses prescribed by the Fröbel Society—we have generally fifty in this college—but we desire that ladies should undertake the care of children before the Kindergarten age, for too often the body is injured and the character distorted by ignorant women before the child leaves the nursery. May we not hope that one day women of refinement and real religion will feel that it is their special duty and privilege to care for the health (salvation in the largest sense) of the little ones, and that girls will qualify themselves for this after their school course by special teaching in the laws of health and all that pertains to the care of infants?

Some will become themselves wives and mothers, others may be deputy-mothers, heads of orphanages, mothers' helps. Some mothers can do all that is necessary for their children, but there are not a few who, from ill health or from other causes, are obliged to leave children much to nursemaids, who are quite incompetent; and many a rich lady would make suitable arrangements and give a good salary to one who would do what she is unable to do herself. Miss Mason, author of *Home Education*, has done much good by organising some such training for older children in

her House of Education at Ambleside, but we need others who will take charge of the little children from still earlier years than her *Tantes*, and treat them from the beginning with such wisdom and gentleness and firmness that Mind and Emotions and Will will be harmoniously developed, and the first seven years of life—the years most precious for the foundation of character—may not be wasted.

Lastly, there is another great and important work waiting for the co-operation of well-educated ladies. Refined women have felt it their duty and privilege to care for the bodily needs of the poor and unfortunate and to provide schools, but they have not given personal service in intellectual matters. Hence, a great intellectual gulf, hard to bridge over, separates different social classes. We want that women of wide culture should obtain the necessary qualifications for teaching in elementary schools, should bring 'sweetness and light' into schools suffering from the pressure of numbers, from the hard conditions of the teachers' lives and the depressing surroundings of the children; they might help to make the school what the name implies—a place of refreshment. They might not only themselves learn to understand better the hard conditions of the poor, but they would bring the Classes and the Masses to understand one another better—too often the so-called working classes consider idleness the goal of work—because they have not known leisure. Those who have, whilst seeking to lighten the heavy burdens and to let the oppressed go free, will yet feel that the goal of work is not idleness but a higher kind of work. To quote the words of Mrs. Browning:

After Adam, work was curse;
The natural creature labours, sweats, and frets.
But, after Christ, work turns to privilege,
And henceforth one with our humanity,
The six-day Worker, working still in us,
Has called us freely to work on with Him
In high companionship. So happiest!
I count that Heaven itself is only work
To a surer issue. Let us work indeed,
But no more work as Adam.

DOROTHEA BEALE.

Two Soldiers.

FORTH went galloping swift and straight
Soldiers twain from the city gate ;

Bearing a message to their king,
Through the foemen beleaguering.

To their king in his peril sore
Tidings of faith and aid they bore.

Spake their chieftain : ' Be swift and bold,
It is a nation's fate ye hold.

' It is a kingdom's hope ye bear.
Speed, speed on, lest the king despair.'

On they rode till declined the sun ;
Now the journey was three parts done.

All the desert seemed lone and drear,
Yet they knew that the foe couched near.

On they rode with never a word—
Hark ! but what in yon thicket stirred ?

Hark ! what hurtled the still air through ?
Whir of an arrow 'twixt the two.

Arrow on arrow pointed well—
From his saddle the foremost fell.

Then the second his charger stayed,
And had sprung to his comrade's aid.

But he rose in his agony,
And he cried with a bitter cry :

'If thou lightest or drawest near,
In thy false heart I'll sheathe my spear!

'Art thou comrade of mine indeed?
On, ride on, for the king hath need!

'On, ride on, lest I die in vain!
Be thou swift with the speed of twain!'

He whispered the steed a word he knew—
Forth through the showering shafts they flew.

On they sped as the swallows flee,
Till they had left the enemy.

Came the nightfall—no rest he craved,
Riding on, till the king was saved.

Spake the king in his citadel:
'Soldier mine, thou hast ridden well.

'At the dawn had the flag gone down;
And thy riding hath saved my crown!

'What is thy guerdon, soldier bold?'
'Sire, my guerdon I have and hold.

'Yet one bounty I would entreat—
Let me lie at my comrade's feet.

'Swift was I with the speed of two—
I the traitor, and he the true.'

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Far away in the desert wide,
There together the comrades bide.

Faithful soldiers in very deed,
They shall waken when God hath need.

They shall waken, nor soon, nor late,
They shall enter the city gate.

MAY KENDALL.

Wolmer Forest.

THE pleasure we have in visible nature depends in a measure on contrast and novelty. Never is moist verdure so refreshing and delightful to the eye as when we come to it from brown heaths and grey barren downs and uplands. So, too, the greenness of the green earth sharpens our pleasure in all stony and waste places ; flowering gardens show us the beauty of thorns and briars, and make us in love with desolation. As in light and dark, wet and dry, tempest and calm, so the peculiar attractions of each scene and aspect of nature are best 'illustrated by their contraries.'

I had, accordingly, the best preparation for a visit to Wolmer by a few days' ramble in the open green and wooded country round Farnham, and Alice Holt Forest with its endless oaks, and especially in the luxuriant meadows and cool shady woods of Waverley Abbey. It was a great change to Wolmer Forest. Although its soil is a 'hungry, bare sand,' it has long been transformed from the naked heath of Gilbert White's time to a vast unbroken plantation. Looked upon from some eminence it has a rough, dark aspect. There are no bald summits and open pleasant places ; all is covered by the shaggy mantle of the pines. But it is nowhere gloomy, as pine woods so often are : the trees are not big enough, on account of that hungry sand in which they are rooted, or because they are not yet very old. The pines not being too high and shady to keep the sun and air out, the old aboriginal vegetation has not been killed : in most places the ling forms a thick undergrowth, and looks almost green, while outside of the forest, in the full glare of the sun, it has a harsh, dry, dead appearance. On account of this abundance of ling a strange and lovely appearance is produced in some favourable years, when the flowers are in great profusion and all the plants blossom at one time. That most beautiful sight of the early spring, when the bloom of the wild hyacinth is like a sea of azure colour under the

woodland trees, is here repeated in July, but with a difference of hue both in the trees above and the bloom beneath.

In May, Wolmer is comparatively flowerless, and there is no bright colour, except that of the earth itself in some naked spot. The water of the sluggish boggy streamlets in the forest takes a deep red or orange hue from the colour of the soil it flows over. The sand abounds with ironstone, which in the mass is deep rust-red and purple coloured. When crushed and pulverised by traffic and weather, on the roads it turns to a vivid chrome yellow. In the hot noonday sun the straight road that runs through the forest appeared like a yellow band or ribbon. That was a curious and novel picture, which I often had before me during the excessively dry and windy weather in May—the vast whity-blue, hot sky, without speck or stain of cloud above, and the dark forest covering the earth, cut through by that yellow zone, extending straight away until it was lost in the hazy distance. Even stranger was the appearance when the wind blew strongest and raised clouds of dust from the road, which flew like fiery yellow vapours athwart the black pines.

In a small house by the roadside in the middle of the forest I found a temporary home. My landlady proved herself a good talker, and treated me to a good deal of Hampshire dialect. Her mind was well stored with ancient memories. At first I let her ramble on without paying too much attention; but at length, while speaking of the many little ups and downs of her not uneventful life, she asked me if I knew Selborne, and then informed me that she was a native of that village, and that her family had lived there for generations. Her mother had reached the age of eighty-six years; she had married her third husband when over seventy. She had left twelve children, and my informant, now aged sixty, was the last born. This wonderful mother of hers, who had survived three husbands, and whose memory went back several years into the eighteenth century, had remembered the Rev. Gilbert White very well. It was wonderful, she said, how many interesting things she used to tell about him; for Gilbert White, whose name was known to the great world outside of his parish, was often in her mind when she recalled her early years. Unfortunately, these interesting things had now all slipped out of my landlady's memory. Whenever I brought her to the point she would stand with eyes cast down, the fingers of her right hand on her forehead, trying—trying to recall something to tell me—a simple creature, who was without imagination, and could

invent nothing! Then little by little she would drift off into something else—to recollections of people and events not so remote in time, scenes she had witnessed herself, and which had made a deeper impression on her mind. One was how her father, when an old man, had acted as horn-blower to the 'Selborne mob,' when the poor villagers were starving; and how, blowing on his horn, he had assembled his fellow-revolutionists, and led them to an attack on the house of some objectionable person; and then on to the neighbouring village of Headley to get recruits for their little army. Then the soldiery arrived on the scene, and took them prisoners and sent them to Winchester, where they were tried by some little, unremembered Judge Jeffreys, who sentenced many or most of them to transportation; but not the leader and horn-blower, who had escaped, and was in hiding among the beeches of the famous Selborne Hanger. Only at midnight he would steal down into the village to get a bite of food and hear the news from his vigorous and vigilant old wife. At length, during one of these midnight excursions he was seen and captured, and sent to Winchester. But by this time the authorities had grown sick—possibly ashamed—of dealing so harshly with a few poor peasants, whose sufferings had made them mad, and the ringleader got off easily, and died in bed at home when his time came.

I did not cease questioning the poor woman because she would not admit that all she had heard about Gilbert White was gone past recall. Often and often had she thought of what her mother had told her. Up to within two or three years ago she remembered it all so well. What was it now? Once more, standing dejected in the middle of the room, she would cudgel her old brains. So much had happened since she was a girl! She had been brought up to farmwork. Here would follow the names of various farms near Selborne, Newton Valance and Oakhanger, where she had worked, mostly in the fields; and of the farmers, long dead and gone most of them, who had employed her. All her life she had worked hard, struggling to live. When people complained of hard times now, of the little that was paid them for their work, she and her husband remembered what it was thirty and forty and fifty years ago, and they wondered what people wanted. Cheap food, cheap clothing, cheap education for the children—everything was cheap now, and the pay more. And she had had so many children to bring up—ten; and seven of

them were married, and having so many children of their own that she could hardly keep count of them.

It was idle to listen; and at last, in desperation, I would jump up and rush out, for the wind was calling in the pines, and the birds were calling, and what they had to tell was of more interest than any human story.

Not far from my cottage there was a hill, from the summit of which the whole area of the forest was visible, and the country all round for many leagues beyond it. I did not like this hill, and refused to pay it a second visit. The extent of country it revealed made the forest appear too small; it spoilt the illusion of a practically endless wilderness, where I could stroll about all day and see no cultivated spot, and no house, and perhaps no human form. The blue outline of 'that vast range of mountains called the Sussex Downs' would please me better seen from some other point. It was, moreover, positively disagreeable to be stared at across the ocean of pines by a big, brand-new, red-brick mansion, standing conspicuous, unashamed, affronting Nature, on some wide heath or lonely hillside.

A second hill, not far from the first, was preferable when I wished for a wide horizon, or to drink the wind and the music of the wind. Round and domelike, it stood alone; and although not nearly so high as its neighbour, it was more conspicuous, and seen from a distance appeared to be really higher. The reason of this was that it was crowned with a grove of Scotch firs with boles that rose straight and smooth and mastlike to a height of about eighty feet; thus, seen from afar, the hill looked about a hundred feet higher than it actually was, the tree-tops themselves forming a thick, round dome, conspicuous above the surrounding forest, and Wolmer's most prominent feature. These were the oldest-looking trees I saw; they must, indeed, have been planted very soon after, if not before, Gilbert White described Wolmer as a naked heath without a tree on it. Some of these hill firs were decaying, others had fallen. The green woodpecker had discovered the unsoundness of many of them; in two or three of the trunks, in their higher part, the birds had made several holes. These were in line, one above the other, like stops in a flute. Most of these far-up houses or flats were tenanted by starlings. This was only too apparent, for the starling, although neat and glossy in his dress, is an untidy tenant, and smears the trunk beneath the entrance to his nest with numberless droppings. You might fancy

that he had set himself to whitewash the tree, and had carelessly capized his little bucket of lime.

It was pleasant in the late afternoon to sit at the feet of these tall red columns—this brave company of trees, that were warred upon by all the winds of heaven, and looked upon the black legions of the forest that covered the earth beneath them for miles around. High up in the swaying, singing tops a kind of musical talk was audible—the starlings' medley of clinking, chattering, wood-sawing, knife-grinding, whistling and bell-like sounds. Higher still, above the tree-tops, the jackdaws were at their aerial gambols—calling to one another, exulting in the wind. They were not breeding there, but were attracted to the spot by the height of the hill, with its crown of soaring trees. Some strong-flying birds—buzzards, kites, vultures, gulls, and many others—love to take their exercise far from earth, making a playground of the vast void heaven. The wind-loving jackdaw, even in his freest, gladdest moments, never wholly breaks away from the earth, and for a playground prefers some high, steep place—a hill, cliff, spire, or tower—where he can perch at intervals, and from which he can launch himself, as the impulse takes him, either to soar and float above, or to cast himself down into the airy gulf below.

Stray herons, too, come to the trees to roost. The great bird could be seen far off, battling with the wind, rising and falling, blown to this side and that, now displaying his pale under-surface, and now the slaty blue of his broad, slow-flapping wings.

As the sun sank nearer to the horizon the tall trunks would catch the level beams and shine like fiery pillars, and the roof thus upheld would look darker and gloomier by contrast. With the passing of that red light the lively bird-notes would cease, the trees would give forth a more solemn, sea-like sound, and the day would end.

Birds are really less abundant in Wolmer than in most places in England, wild or cultivated, favourable to bird-life. The dry, sandy soil, with its clothing of harsh ling and gloomy pine, is less attractive to a majority of the small species than the moist, green places of the earth. Thrushes, warblers, finches, tits, and other species that abound everywhere in copses, hedges, orchards, and plantations, are few; the nightingale, blackcap, and garden warbler are not heard, or are heard rarely, and it is possible to spend many hours in the forest without once hearing the familiar note of the common sparrow. On the other hand, the variety is

greater, and it is therefore in a sense richer. The number of forms, and voices not commonly heard elsewhere, with something in the vegetation and scenery, produce altogether a novel and refreshing effect. One seems all at once to have been transported to a district out of that island where uniformity, smoothness, monotony, are prized above all things, where the rare birds, with those that excel in size or beauty, are carefully weeded out.

On the skirts of the forest and the adjacent commons the bird that attracts most attention is the cuckoo. There he is very abundant, but within the forest he is but one, and by no means the most common, of a very considerable number of breeding species outside the Passerine order, ranging in size from the green woodpecker up to the heron, mallard, and pheasant. One could count on seeing or hearing a dozen or fifteen of such species in the course of a day's ramble.

The green woodpecker is quite common, and it struck me that he is seen in perfection here rather than among deciduous trees. More than once in some open glade, as I watched him going from me with laborious rising and falling flight, his sunlit green and yellow plumage looking very bright against the dark background of pines, I was tempted to say that in beauty he matched the jay and kingfisher at their best.

The turtle-dove is the most abundant species. Wolmer is its metropolis in southern England, just as Savernake Forest is that of the jackdaw and the jay. In many places their cooing monotone was heard on all sides and all day long; and as one walked small flocks of half a dozen to a dozen birds started up every few minutes with loud-flapping wings. Heard at a distance there is, perhaps, not much to choose between the coo of the turtle and the one low unchangeable note of the stock dove. Both have a rattle in their throats. Heard closer the turtle-dove's voice has a melodious quality, which makes it pleasant in spite of the rattle, and is not so monotonous, as the four notes which compose his song, although in tone alike, are unequal in length and differently inflected. In most places this is a shy dove; in Wolmer he is tamer than the wood-pigeon, and it was pleasant to observe at a distance of no more than twenty-five or thirty yards a flock quietly feeding and sunning themselves in various attitudes. At that short distance the shadings and mottlings of their soft plumage and their various pretty gestures and motions were very plainly seen. But the bird's best aspect is when he flies from you, and drops or glides into the pines at a distance of forty or fifty yards away with the

noonday sun full on him. Seen at the right angle his wings are white as silver. For a moment he shines with a strange splendour, then vanishes in the blackness of the trees. I do not know the reason of this, as his dove-coloured wings are not glossed, and the same effect is not seen in other pigeons.

More to me than these, even than the laughing green yaffin-gale and silvery doves, were the species, such as the teal, that are rare in England in the spring and summer season. In Wolmer these pretty and entertaining little ducks have, no doubt, bred uninterruptedly for centuries; let us hope that for centuries to come they will continue to inhabit the ancient pools and boggy places in the forest. By chance I very soon discovered their choicest breeding-place, not far from that dome-shaped, fir-crowned hill which was my principal landmark. This was a boggy place, thirty or forty acres in extent, surrounded by trees and overgrown with marsh weeds and grasses, and in places with rushes. Cotton grass grew in the drier parts, and the tufts nodding in the wind looked at a distance like silvery white flowers. At one end of the marsh there were clumps of willow and alder, where the reed bunting was breeding and the grasshopper warbler uttered his continuous whirring sound, which seemed to accord with the singing of the wind in the pines. At the other end there was open water with patches of rushes growing in it; and here at the water's edge, shaded by a small fir, I composed myself on a bed of heather to watch the birds.

The inquisitive moorhens were the first to appear, uttering from time to time their sharp, loud protest. Their suspicion lessened by degrees but was never wholly laid aside, and one bird, slyly leaving the water, made a wide circuit and approached me through the trees in order to get a better view of me. A sudden movement on my part when he was only three yards from me gave him a terrible fright. Mallards showed themselves at intervals, swimming into the open water, or rising a few yards above the rushes, then dropping down out of sight again. Where the rushes grew thin and scattered, ducklings appeared, swimming one behind the other, busily engaged in snatching insects from the surface. By-and-by a pair of teal rose up, flew straight towards me, and dropped into the open water within eighteen yards of where I sat. They were greatly excited, and no sooner touched the water than they began calling loudly; then, from various points, others rose and hurried to join them, and in a few moments there were eleven, all disporting themselves on the water at that short distance.

Teal are always tamer than ducks of other kinds, but the tameness of these Wolmer birds was astonishing and very delightful. For a moment or two I imagined that they were excited at my presence, but it very soon appeared that they were entirely absorbed in their own affairs, and cared nothing about me. What a wonderfully lively, passionate, variable, and even ridiculous little creature the teal is! Compared with his great relations, swans, geese, and the bigger ducks, he is like a monkey or squirrel among stately bovine animals. Now the teal has a world-wide range, being found in all climates, and is of many species; they are, moreover, variable in plumage, some species having an exceedingly rich and beautiful colouring; but wherever found, and however different in colour, they are much the same in disposition—they are loquacious, excitable, and violent in their affections beyond other ducks, and, albeit highly intelligent, more fearless than other birds habitually persecuted by man. A sedate teal is as rare as a sober-coloured humming-bird. The teal is also of so social a temper that even in the height of the breeding season he is accustomed to meet his fellows at little gatherings. A curious thing is that at these meetings they do not, like most social birds, fall into one mind, and comport themselves in an orderly, disciplined manner, all being moved by one contagious impulse. On the contrary, each bird appears to have an impulse of his own and to follow it without regard to what his fellows may be doing. One must have his bath, another his frolic; one falls to courting, another to quarrelling, or even fighting, and so on, and the result is a lively splashing, confused performance, which is pretty, and amusing to see. It was an exhibition of this kind which I was so fortunate as to witness at the Wolmer pond. The body-jerking antics and rich varied plumage of the drakes gave them a singular as well as a beautiful appearance; and as they dashed and splashed about, sometimes not more than fourteen yards from me, their motions were accompanied by all the cries and calls they have—their loud call, which is a bright and lively sound; chatterings and little sharp, exclamatory notes; a long trill, somewhat metallic or bell-like; and a sharp nasal cry, rapidly reiterated several times, like a laugh.

After they had worked off their excitement and finished their fun they broke up into pairs and threes, and went off in various directions, and I saw no more of them.

It was not until the sun had set that a snipe appeared. First one rose from the marsh, and began to play over it in the usual

manner; then another rose to keep him company, and finally a third. Most of the time they hovered with their breasts towards me, and seen through my glass against the pale luminous sky their round, stout bodies, long bills, and short, rapidly vibrating wings, gave them the appearance of gigantic insects rather than birds. At intervals of half a minute or so the hovering bird would dash obliquely downwards a distance of twenty or thirty feet, producing in his descent the peculiar and mysterious snipe sound, like the tremulous faint bleat of a lost lamb heard at a vast distance.

At length, tired of watching the birds, I stretched myself out in the ling and continued listening to them, and while thus occupied an amusing incident occurred. A flock of eighteen mallards rose up with a startled cry from the marsh at a distance, and after flying once or twice round, dropped down again. Then the sound of crackling branches and of voices talking became audible advancing round the marsh towards me. It was the first human sound I had heard that day at that spot. Then the sounds ceased, and after a couple of minutes of silence I glanced round in the direction they had proceeded from, and beheld a curious sight. Three boys, one about twelve years old, the others smaller, were grouped together on the edge of the pool, gazing fixedly across the water at me. They had taken me for a corpse, or an escaped criminal, or some such dreadful object, lying there in the depth of the forest. The biggest boy had dropped on to one knee among the rough heather, and the other two, standing on either side, were resting their hands on his shoulders. Seen thus, in their loose, threadbare grey clothes and caps, struck motionless, their white, scared faces, parted lips, and wildly staring eyes turned to me, they were like a group cut in stone. I laughed and waved my hand to them, whereupon their faces relaxed and they immediately dropped into natural attitudes. Very soon they moved away among the trees, but after eight or ten minutes they reappeared near me, and finally, from motives of curiosity, came uninvited to my side. They proved to be very good specimens of the boy naturalist; thorough little outlaws, with keen senses, and the passion for wildness strong in them. They told me that when they went birds'-nesting they made a day of it, taking bread and cheese in their pockets, and not returning till the evening. For an hour we talked in the fading light of day on the wild creatures in the forest, until we could no longer endure the cloud of gnats that had gathered round us.

After sunset the nightjar is the leading vocalist of the forest. He takes the place of the turtle-dove. One evening I heard several birds rattling in concert at one spot in the forest, while at the same spot one bird was uttering the loud, curious cry which seems not to come from the nightjar, owing to its being seldom heard, and to its shrill, piercing character, so different from the other sounds the bird emits. It reminds one of the ringing, penetrating cries of the oyster-catcher, jack-curlew, and other shore birds; but it is, perhaps, more like the short, sharp, shrill scream of some falcon. When I approached the spot the birds became silent. On the following night I was more fortunate. At the same spot and at the same hour—about half-past nine o'clock—the concert began, and, as on the previous evening, several birds rattled while one uttered the shrill cry. This cry was repeated every five or six seconds for about a dozen times, then, after an interval of two or three minutes, it would begin again. Approaching the spot very cautiously, I at length got to within twenty to twenty-five yards of the birds. There were four birds rattling; one was visible, perched on a dead twig at the summit of a young fir tree, plainly silhouetted against the sky. The others were all within a few yards. Meanwhile the loud, shrill cry was being uttered, now on this side, now on that, sometimes going away to a distance of a hundred yards or more, then returning and sounding close by. Twice I saw this bird dart past me, once within three or four feet of my face, uttering his shrill cry as he flew, his wings raised so high above his back as to give him the form of the letter V.

Whether or not it was the same bird that shot and glided about among the trees, uttering shrill cries, while the others rattled on their perches, I could not, of course, say; but after being present for a quarter of an hour at this display, and remembering that it was a repetition of what had occurred on the previous evening, I could not help thinking that it was of the nature of those meetings for play or courtship, with set performances, which are seen in so many species of birds.

I have given but a glimpse of Wolmer, with a few of the beautiful wild creatures found in it, and have now only space to add a few general remarks.

An idea of the variety of life in Wolmer may be gathered from the fact that during a few days' visit I was able to make a list of twenty-five *breeding* species, all, the crows excepted, outside the Passerine or small birds order. Probably the right number would

be thirty or more, as my list does not include several generally distributed species, some very common—rook, magpie, wryneck, both spotted woodpeckers, kingfisher, wood owl, common sandpiper, and landrail. A list of the small birds was not attempted.

In view of this somewhat exceptional character of its bird population, one is tempted to ask, with concern, what the future of this forest is to be with regard to its wild life. As things are there is the possibility that at any time it may be degraded to the level of the neighbouring forest of Alice Holt. This is leased for shooting purposes to several private persons, who use their respective sections as pheasant preserves, with the result that all other winged creatures above a thrush in size are relentlessly exterminated by gamekeepers. These couple of thousand acres of oak forest have really little more to interest the student or lover of bird life than may be found in the well-guarded coppices of any London stockjobber's 'place in Surrey.' Wolmer so far has not been cursed by the pheasant-coddling mania; the pheasant there is a wild bird, and takes his chance with the others, and has for neighbours the carrion crow and jay. Nature has not had quite a free hand, but has been permitted a greater freedom than in most places. Furthermore, this forest has very great possibilities: it may be made the means of restoring to Hampshire some of those noble forms of bird life that have been lost.

Some time ago Mr. C. J. Cornish, the author of *Wild England of To-Day*, suggested that this tract might be made a sanctuary for all wild creatures. It is a very general belief among naturalists that only by establishing sanctuaries, where birds would be safe from persecution all the year round, can a further diminution in the number of our species be prevented. Doubtless it is because there has been no place of refuge that Wolmer, with the surrounding country, has lost so many important species in recent times—the great bustard, stone plover, curlew, black grouse, kite, buzzards, harriers, raven, and bittern. The blackcock could be restored by man, and the capercaillie, if introduced, would here find the conditions best suited to it. All the others, the bustard excepted, may be set down as occasional visitors to the district, and it is extremely probable that some of them would, if unmolested, breed and become permanent residents in the forest. I may mention here that Hampshire is, so far as I know, the only county in the southern half of England where a pair of ravens breed inland on a tree. The young of this protected pair, when driven from the nest, would doubtless prefer to build in trees if allowed to do so. The

common buzzard is another species of which the return to this district may safely be prophesied. It is certain that one pair bred in Hampshire last summer (1896); of this year it is too soon to speak yet. But whether or not any of these vanished ones returned, it is certain that the number of interesting species the forest now counts would be increased; and that as time went by the birds would become tamer, and the pleasure of seeing them would accordingly be greater.

Probably there is not a naturalist in the kingdom, nor a sportsman worthy of the name, who would not heartily agree with Mr. Cornish in his wish, and who would not gladly unite in petitioning the Government to secure so desirable an object. It may be added, that it would be hard to find a more suitable spot than Wolmer for an inland sanctuary, or one where such a scheme could more easily be carried out, on account of the variety of birds, both land and water, already existing in it, of its large extent and position in the midst of a sparsely populated country, and of the absence of squatters and commoners with commoners' right in it.

W. H. HUDSON.

A Smoking Concert.

THE idea of becoming a county cricketer had laid hold upon Teddy, and during the greater part of a doubtful afternoon he kept Aubrey bowling to him on the tennis-lawn behind the orchard. The younger children fielded, with equal patience and incapacity, for, early in the proceedings, Caroline, pleading a touch of headache, had retired, under fire of derisive comments from the batsman, but in excellent order, and covering her retreat by a well-timed jeer, delivered as she reached the orchard gate. The words fell on deaf ears; Teddy was absorbed in poking a ball to leg, and, besides, he had no desire to heed the trivial utterances of a mere girl like Caroline. The weather was anything but propitious, for dull, sullen clouds, rolling up one by one, had obscured the blue, and now hung close above the apple-trees, wherefore Teddy was eager to put in as much practice as possible before the rain began. At the same time he considered Caroline's defection exceedingly disloyal. She was an excellent field; he missed her accordingly; and the nursery children, trembling at his nod, trotted hither and thither on short, fat legs, weary and perspiring, but proud of their employment, and fearing to plead fatigue lest they too should fall under the lash of their brother's satire.

About three o'clock an unfortunate accident delayed proceedings for a few minutes, and, just as Teddy resumed his place at the wicket, Caroline again appeared, returning to the tennis-ground. She wore her best frock, and she carried in her hand a parasol belonging to Miss Spalding—a pale green parasol lined with pink, which threw a becoming flush over the complexion. Caroline walked delicately; as she descended the wooden steps leading to the lawn she stooped a little, so that the edges of her short skirt trailed upon the ground behind her, and the brothers, watching her approach, understood, in a moment, that for a season she had passed beyond their influence. Caroline in her best

frock, Caroline in this mood of haughty womanhood, was not the Caroline of every-day, nor any fit companion for self-respecting boys. Teddy, leaning on his bat, regarded her cynically.

'What's the g-good of trailing her skirt? It won't make her any bigger,' he said to Aubrey, and then he raised his voice to remark that a parasol—especially in the absence of sunshine—could only be regarded as a superfluous and despicable luxury. 'Though,' he added, with a contemptuous glance at his friend's finery, 'if you're going about like *that*, a p-parasol or two won't make any difference. What's the good of you, dressed up such a guy? You c-can't bowl, or bat, or climb a tree; you c-can't even run decently.'

Caroline lowered the parasol to reply, with dignity, that she felt no desire to behave like a rough schoolboy, and that, for her part, she preferred clean hands to dirty ones, and appreciated now and again a decent change of clothing. Aubrey, ball in hand, waited for the argument to develop, and the children stood round, open-eyed and expectant. As for Caroline, she had more to say, and probably would have said it effectively, had not her attention been suddenly diverted by a choking gurgle from little Michael, who, though he struggled manfully to do so, was unable completely to disguise his injured feelings. Caroline turned her head, and, quick as thought, sprang across the grass towards him, her fine feathers forgotten, and all the motherhood in her roused to instant energy. A cricket-ball, alighting on the end of a minute and chubby finger, is apt to cause pain and inconvenience; Michael's round face was pathetically stained with tears, and his breath came in long, uneven sobs, to which, as Caroline's arms closed round him, he suddenly gave full vent. It was a mistaken ebullition; Michael knew that thereby he must lose the respect of both his elder brothers, but he really could not help it. His finger ached badly, a sympathetic touch broke down the last barrier of reserve, and immediately he howled aloud in dismal self-condolence.

Caroline, kneeling before him, turned fiercely upon the elder boys.

'Michael's hurt—he's badly hurt!' she cried; 'and you'd have made him go on fielding. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves.'

Teddy remained severely in his place; it was not his part to console a weeping child, and really he had already, with sundry pats of encouragement, done the utmost that could be demanded

of him in this direction. Aubrey inspected the injured member with his usual grave attention.

'The nail is all right, so there isn't much amiss,' he remarked, consolingly. 'There can't be, you know, or he'd have cried at once. Don't coddle him, Caroline; it's awfully bad for a fellow.'

But Caroline, in assuming the garb of womanhood, had for the time assumed also its views and its limitations. She was more pitiful over Michael's mishap than Miss Spalding herself could have been, and under her caresses the injured youth began to consider himself a martyr, while his tears flowed more and more abundantly. The other children envied him such prestige and importance. For a similar prominence they too would gladly have paid the penalty of bruised fingers; but Fortune is a fickle jade—everyone cannot become a hero, and, at present, Teddy's practice, with their hopes of glory, appeared to be indefinitely suspended. But it is foolish to presume on the patience of even a patient man, and before long Teddy came to the end of his. He left off patting the level turf with his bat, and drew himself up to remonstrate.

'Stop that, Michael,' he said; 'it's p-perfectly ridic'ulous. And you, Caroline, take him in if you want to fuss over him. I call it sickening. What's to bec-come of him when he goes to school, I wonder?'

'He can't *help* crying; he's such a *little* boy,' retorted Caroline, indignantly. 'I don't know what's the matter with you, Teddy, lately; you're never happy unless you're hurting something.'

Teddy shrugged his shoulders. 'He's not much hurt, so you needn't think it. Only all this nonsense makes him cry, of course. G-go in, do, and take him with you—you're standing on the pitch.'

'I shall take *all* the children with me,' said Caroline, shaking Michael gently on to his feet. 'Neither of you is fit to be trusted with them.'

'That's right,' responded Teddy, ungratefully; 'then p-perhaps there'll be a little peace. One c-can't hit out now for fear of killing a kid. C-come on, Aubrey; it'll rain in a minute; don't stand dreaming there.'

He squared his shoulders, and Caroline, skipping nimbly on one side, avoided a fast ball that whizzed, singing, past her ears. In everyday life she would have been unable to tear herself away; a cricket practice was dear to her heart, and at cover-point she

felt mistress of the situation. But this afternoon another mood possessed her. She lingered yet a moment, Michael's free hand in hers (half of the other was stuffed into his mouth), and the parasol again unfurled above her head. 'I'm going to a bazaar,' she announced; 'a bazaar at the Town Hall, with Miss Spalding. She sent me to ask whether you would like to go too; there's room in the carriage, she says.'

'Is it the brougham?' inquired Aubrey.

Caroline shook her head, 'I can't tell, but Miss Spalding has arranged——'

'But *I* can tell,' said Teddy, glancing at the sullen sky. 'Of c-course it's the brougham. N-no, thank you; no stuffy carriage for me. Now then, Aubrey.'

Caroline gathered the children around her, and, with renewed dignity, moved away towards the house, the little ones trailing obediently behind her. In this order they reached the orchard, when a sudden spatter of rain drove them hastily forward, and in a moment, like leaves before the wind, they disappeared, helter-skelter, out of view.

Aubrey jerked the ball discontentedly from between his fingers. 'It's going to pour,' he said; 'what a bother! P'raps, after all, we'd better have gone to the bazaar.'

Teddy treated the idea with the scorn it merited. 'Not we,' he said. 'There's lots to do, though anything would be better than that. Why, you'd have to p-put on an Eton jacket; she'd be sure to expect it, and p-p'raps a pair of gloves. L-look here, I'll tell you what we'll do; we'll have a smoking concert.'

'But smoking always makes me sick,' objected Aubrey.

'That's no matter. It makes lots of men sick, but of c-course they go on with it all the same. They must, you know. B-besides, when you feel sick you can sing, if you like, and I'll d-do the smoking,' said Teddy, eagerly.

This amendment met with Aubrey's approval. He sang in the choir at school, and was, moreover, proud of a large repertoire of popular tags and choruses, which he rendered with a solemnity and precision worthy of better material.

'But,' he objected, 'we haven't got anything to smoke.' He turned his pockets inside out. 'I've no money, and I know you spent yours, so we can't buy tobacco, and father always locks his away in the cabinet. Besides, Teddy, do you think we ought? We shall catch it if father hears what we've been doing.'

'Father won't hear, and if he d-does, why it's worth a row,'

said Teddy, magnificently. 'Lots of the boys at school smoke; and as for the tobacco, c-come with me.'

He led his brother under the apple-trees and away, through the straightly falling rain, till they came to the stable-yard. Thence, up a narrow flight of stone stairs, Teddy sped haphazard, with Aubrey at his heels, and entered a small square chamber overlooking the yard, a chamber whose windows were darkened by dust and grime, and where the broom of a housemaid never penetrated. The floor was piled with lumber, and, on shelves round the walls, were ranged rows upon rows of bottles, in every size and shape, all covered with cobwebs, and all alike dingy and mysterious. Here, too, was an old pestle and mortar, a retort, and various other disused paraphernalia, to the presence of which the room owed its name of the Chemistry Chamber. It was a dismal place for a concert, but the only place available, and it had already been the scene of many an orgy, since here, and here alone, the boys considered themselves safe from a ubiquitous surveillance.

Teddy tiptoed across the worm-eaten floor, and kneeling beside a broken-down chest of drawers, extracted therefrom a piece of dirty newspaper, in which were carefully wrapped a goodly supply of tobacco and a whole packet of cigarette papers. Aubrey looked on in wide-eyed astonishment.

'You see,' explained Teddy, who fully realised the importance of the moment, 'Uncle Charlie g-gave me a sixpence the other day for c-cleaning his pipes, and some of this tobacco is what he turned out of his j-jars—the big red ones, you know, in his b-bed-room. The rest I bought, and I knew he wouldn't mind our having the c-cigarette papers, he's got such a lot of them.'

'He won't mind our having them,' said Aubrey—'not he. But father will.'

'Oh, well, he's not likely to know about it, and the papers aren't his,' said Teddy, easily. 'Now sit down and let's begin. We c-can sing and talk, you know, alternately, and we must g-go on smoking all the time.'

He pulled out from the *débris* a rickety three-legged stool, balancing himself upon it, while Aubrey occupied an overturned box at the opposite side of the window, and both boys proceeded to roll cigarettes with more or less dexterity, an accomplishment which, together with several others, they owed to their graceless Uncle Charlie. Outside, the rain, driven slantwise by a rising wind, beat across the dingy casements and threshed over the

cobble-stones of the yard, and below, in the harness-room, they heard the coachman grumble at having to turn out on such an afternoon. Teddy, curled up on his stool, hugged himself ecstatically.

'No one'll k-know where we are,' he said; 'and if Bryce smells the smoke, he won't tell. We shall have to go in to tea, I suppose, but we can c-come here again afterwards. Miss Spalding's out, so that'll be all right.'

'It's all right unless father catches us,' said Aubrey, laboriously licking his third cigarette; 'though, of course, if we're asked what we've been doing, we can't tell a lie.'

'Of c-course not,' assented Teddy. He added his contribution to the little pile of smoking materials and recommenced rolling the flimsy papers; 'though it doesn't seem to matter about speaking the truth half so much as it matters *when* you speak it,' he said, reflectively, his thoughts dallying with an event of last week which had made a deep impression on his mind.

'You mean about Miss Spalding's teeth,' said Aubrey, with unusual penetration. Teddy nodded.

'After all, I only s-spoke the truth, and I can't see that it mattered,' said he; 'but she got in an awful wax with me, and father was sarcastical.'

Aubrey remained silent, absorbed in a careful adjustment of stringy tobacco, but he too, in spite of present preoccupation, puzzled for a moment over the disgrace which some days before had fallen upon his brother.

It happened thus. During an hour's practice Aubrey had bowled a full pitch straight at Teddy's face, and, the batsman's lips remaining, as was customary with him, slightly and eagerly parted, a broken front tooth was the immediate result. Unfortunately, the gap thus left proved too conspicuous for concealment, and at lunch-time Teddy became the victim of much commiseration and a great deal of unnecessary 'fuss,' which he resented the more since his father, and several 'lunch visitors,' were present at the table. 'It d-doesn't matter,' he had said at last, anxious to stem the tide of feminine condolence; 'I c-can easily have a n-new one. Miss Spalding has several, you know.' To his bewilderment, this simple speech had produced an effect that seemed to him incredible; and moreover he had found himself, though why he could not tell, in sad disgrace with the authorities.

'I wish I'd held my t-tongue,' he said to Aubrey. 'Somehow,

we always s-say the wrong thing at home ; we n-never do with Cousin Winnie.'

'Of course, you see,' said Aubrey, as he pulled gingerly at his first cigarette, 'you weren't *bound* to tell about her teeth, Teddy ; if you hadn't, it wouldn't have been a lie, you know. And yet father says the truth is always good and beautiful.'

'H'm,' said Teddy, 'I don't know. I seem to g-get in a row as often for speaking too much truth as too little. I say, wasn't Caroline a gumph to go off to that b-bazaar ? She might have had no end of a time here with us.'

'But she couldn't have smoked,' said Aubrey, doubtfully. He rather envied Caroline this exemption from the privileges of manhood—already his uncle's tobacco had begun to take effect upon him.

Teddy tilted his stool, to lean luxuriously against the wall. 'Oh, I don't know,' he said, watching the thin smoke curl above his head. 'Ladies do it now ; l-lots of them. I heard Uncle Charlie tell Miss Spalding so the other day, and besides, don't you remember ? we saw that p-pretty lady at Mrs. Fenton's ; *she* smoked.'

'Yes, but she was a foreigner,' said Aubrey ; 'foreigners do all sorts of funny things.' He laid his cigarette aside upon the window ledge. 'I think I'll sing now,' he said, a trifle uncertainly.

'All right,' returned Teddy, with a touch of contemptuous pity in his voice ; 'o-one of us ought to sing, I suppose, and *I* want to smoke. Fire away, then.'

So Aubrey sang, in his sweet high voice, and Teddy lit a new cigarette, after the approved fashion, from the glowing end of the last one, while the rain pattered upon roof and window pane, and presently the tea-bell summoned both soloist and audience away into the house.

Returning once more to their interrupted festivities, the boys, to their amazement, found Caroline in possession of the concert-hall.

'I smelt the smoke,' she explained, 'and so I just guessed what you were up to.' She glanced at their stern faces appealingly. 'You'll let me stay now I have come,' she pleaded. 'It's been so dull all the afternoon—and—and—horrid. I won't smoke if you'd rather I didn't, but *do* let me stop with you.'

'*You* smoke !' said Teddy. 'I should think n-not, indeed ! Only let me c-catch you, that's all. But, of course, you can't smoke, you'd be sick at once if you tried.'

'No,' said Caroline, eagerly, 'I shouldn't really, not quite at once. I learnt last Christmas, but—but I'm not *very* fond of it.'

'You shall sing,' said Aubrey, decidedly. 'Ladies don't smoke; at least, only foreigners. She can stay, can't she, Teddy?'

Teddy looked at the best frock, and the dainty lace-trimmed hat, with grim disapproval.

'Oh, you don't *know* what a time I've had,' urged Caroline, 'or how I hate these things;' she jerked the hat impatiently from her, upon the dirty floor, and quavered suddenly into tears. 'I've lost my half-crown,' she sobbed; 'they stole it from me, and I shall never, never see it again.'

Teddy, with a longing glance at the pile of cigarettes upon the window ledge, applied himself to consolation. Evidently Caroline had been amply punished for her disaffection of the afternoon, and besides some great injustice was afoot. Teddy hated injustice more than anything else in the world, and he hated it worse than ever when presently Caroline became able to relate her misfortunes: how the drive into Millingford had been unusually hot and suffocating; how, on their arrival at the bazaar, nothing could be found worth the purchasing; and how, in the end, she had paused at the refreshment stall to ask for a particularly tempting pink ice, and there had lost all that made life worth the living. The bazaar was to benefit an exceedingly worthy object, for which it was considered legitimate to make money in every conceivable way; therefore Caroline ought not to have been surprised when her half-crown was swept into a charming velvet bag, embroidered with lilies, and she heard herself informed that 'No change could be given at the refreshment stall.' Alas! she *was* surprised—very much surprised, and stunned, and puzzled. The half-crown was her only one; she had had a thousand plans for the spending of it, nor was there any hope, for some time at least, of her becoming the happy possessor of another. She had expected that the ice might cost, perhaps, a penny; and already, when the fiat was announced, her little hand was outstretched to receive the two and fivepence due to her. It was always impossible for Caroline, when she felt most, to explain herself. She had looked at the fashionable young lady behind the counter and her throat swelled, while the hot colour flamed in her burning cheeks. But no words came to her relief, no thought of redress entered her mind, and, after a moment of stupefaction, she had turned round and plunged again into the crowd, leaving the too-expensive ice untouched upon the counter.

All this, between her sobs, she now explained to Aubrey and Teddy, and in their rough sympathy found tardy consolation. Secretly, Teddy thought the lesson a good one; it would be a long time ere Caroline preferred her best clothes and Miss Spalding's society to freedom, cricket, and the open air; but the poor little girl had been abominably badly treated, and he would not hint that such a punishment might prove opportune. Even the gentle Aubrey was roused to unusual indignation.

'I call it downright dishonest,' he said. 'That woman ought to be ashamed of herself. Do you know who she was, Caroline?'

Caroline thought her name was Marrable.

'There are three Miss Marrables,' said Aubrey, thoughtfully. 'I wonder which it was?'

'It's no matter. I shall never take my hat off to one of them again,' said Teddy, 'then we can be sure of their knowing what we think about it. D-don't cry any more, Caroline. It can't be helped now, but it was a b-beastly shame.'

Aubrey considered for a moment. 'I sha'n't take my hat off to them either,' he said at length, 'though p'raps it's not quite fair, as two of them have done no harm. All the same, it's the only way to be sure about it.'

'As far as fairness goes, I don't believe grown-up people know anything about it,' said Caroline, hotly. She dried her eyes and shook out her tumbled skirts. 'Aren't you going on with the concert, and can't I stay and help you?' she inquired, with anxiety.

Aubrey dragged a broken wicker chair into the centre of the floor, Teddy enthroned their visitor upon it, and the concert recommenced. Aubrey, who felt invigorated by tea, ventured upon another cigarette, while Caroline, relieved to find that smoking was not expected of her (there are some advantages, after all, in being a woman), contributed song after song to the entertainment, and Teddy smoked, and clapped, and applauded with superabundant energy. In this excitement the slackening of the rain passed unnoticed, and even the lingering golden light of a watery sunset possessed no charms to lure the children from their lair; it struck and quivered through the dust-encrusted windows, and flickered on floor and ceiling in an appeal that remained unheeded and unanswered. Thus time flew till, when the room was satisfactorily full of smoke and the noise at its loudest, a sudden hush fell alike upon songstress and on audience. The door

was wide open, and Authority stood upon the threshold—Authority with a face so grim that even the steadfast Teddy faltered.

That was an awful moment, but a worse followed when, the one sheep having been separated from the goats, Aubrey and Teddy found themselves alone with their father in the library. Not the least part of their offence, they were told, was the implication of a lady and a guest in their low and vulgar amusements; it was impossible that any girl, unsolicited, could desire to be present at such a saturnalia. Teddy set his lips together, and Aubrey, mild-eyed, remained also silent. The business was bad enough; if Caroline could be shielded, they meant to shield her. A little blame more or less mattered nothing now to them.

'Aub-brey,' suggested Teddy presently, 'isn't as b-bad as I am; he only smoked t-two half c-cigarettes. He couldn' m-manage any more; it m-makes him so s-sick. B-besides, i arranged the c-concert.'

Teddy stammered so badly that it was difficult to gather his meaning, but Aubrey understood him in a moment.

'I *am* as bad as you,' he said, defiantly. 'I'd have smoked the lot if I could; it wasn't that I didn't *want* to. And I sang. There's no difference between us.'

Their father looked from one to the other of the boys.

'It's not an easy thing to repress the irrepressible,' said he; 'but I mean to have a try for it. Don't you know that the one unforgivable sin in a boy is smoking, and the next to that disobedience? And the third is to grow up before your time. You've sinned them all three, and tried to drag Caroline along with you. Well, since you wish to be men, you shall be men, and I hope you'll take your punishment in a manly spirit. Pray be seated and accept my hospitality for the evening.'

He placed his two sons in two big armchairs and brought out a handful of choice cigars. One of them he handed to each of the boys, together with a light.

'You will find these an excellent brand,' he said, with suave politeness, 'and I mean you to smoke the whole of them, unless, indeed, illness should prevent you.'

'Thank you, father,' said Teddy, and both boys, in a pause of bewilderment, began to smoke. The evening was rather chilly, a wood fire had been lighted upon the wide hearth, and, save for the crackling of the logs, silence held the room and all within it. The father made no further remarks, and the boys dared not offer any. Teddy leant back in his chair, crossed his short legs, as he

had seen his Uncle Charlie do, and puffed his cigar with apparent enjoyment. Aubrey took the matter differently, but when sickness creeps upward from the stomach jauntiness is not easily assumable. Aubrey sat very far forward upon his chair, his toes beat a restless tattoo on the carpet, his face became unnaturally pale. Presently he laid down the cigar and rose unsteadily.

'Can I go, father?' he said, and his father nodded. Teddy looked up for a moment and smoked on unconcernedly. At the door Aubrey cannoned violently against Uncle Charlie.

'Hallo! what's up?' cried he, catching at his nephew, and then in blank astonishment releasing him again. 'Good heavens, Teddy! What do I behold?'

'Only a convivial meeting,' said Teddy's father. 'Come in and join us, Charlie. I wouldn't detain Aubrey if I were you,' he added significantly.

Uncle Charlie came in, and sat down opposite Teddy. From the long paved corridor they caught the echo of Aubrey's flying footsteps.

Uncle Charlie helped himself to a cigar.

'Well,' said he, 'certainly, Thomas, you are original; but I doubt if the results will be more than immediate.'

'Hush-h,' said Teddy's father.

At the end of twenty minutes Teddy dropped the stump of his cigar into the heart of the fire. He leaned back in his chair, stretching himself slightly; his face, like Aubrey's, had become very pale, but he showed no other sign of discomfort. His father again pushed the cigars towards him across the table.

'Take another,' he said laconically, and Teddy, without a word, obeyed.

Uncle Charlie glanced at his brother-in-law and slightly raised his eyebrows. Teddy, who had bent forward to strike a match, did not notice the gesture. Teddy's father shook his head.

Again the three smoked in silence, but Teddy's calm was fast deserting him. He found it difficult to sit still; little feverish movements relieved the tension of mind and body, he drummed unconsciously with his fingers on the arms of his chair. It was very hard to keep down the nausea which threatened to overwhelm him; he began to cough, and wheeze, as the smoke chose its own way and crept down his throat and up his nostrils; his head swam, and the crackling of the burning logs sounded a long way off. Presently, through the haze and confusion, he again

heard his father's voice addressing him, apparently from a great distance.

'Teddy,' the voice said, 'I think you have had enough. If you like, you can go now; you need not finish that cigar.'

Teddy got upon his feet. He felt that to speak would bring about the *dénouement* against which he had fought so long and so valiantly, and he was prepared to suffer anything rather than be thus ignominiously overcome. Very carefully he walked across the polished floor and out into the corridor. Once there, swift flight became immediately imperative.

'What do you mean to make of him?' said Uncle Charlie. 'Better put him into the Army; he's cut out for a V.C.'

MABEL MURRAY HICKSON.

At the Sign of the Ship.

THE death of Mrs. Oliphant afflicts us even more with the loss of a friend than with the loss of an author. This lady's earthly task was done; home she has gone and taken her wages. For at least forty-five years her industry knew no pause. In fiction, biography, history, essay, criticism she was constantly at work, nor did the world know for hers half of what she wrote anonymously. This is not the place or time for an estimate of her labours. Doubtless and inevitably the first sprightly runnings of her invention were the freshest and most enduring. In history her aim was rather brightness of statement than depth of research. In biography she adopted and interpreted Edward Irving and St. Francis with equal readiness. She was quite unmatched in our time, when she wrote with reverence and with astonishing originality of genius about 'The Unseen,' as in *The Beleaguered City*. The humour, shrewdness, and sympathy of her best novels are universally acknowledged. In criticism it is but a few weeks since one was admiring her wit in a notice of a foolish book; a notice not without a touch of smiling and well-merited cruelty. For she died with much work in her hands, including her historical account of the firm of Blackwood. Much of this I had read with keen interest. She was a valiant woman of letters.

* * *

But it is not of the author that one thinks to-day. To know Mrs. Oliphant, in a phrase which contains no exaggeration, was to love her. She lived and worked for others; hers were the most generous labours, hers were the kindest heart and the most open hand. The sorrows that beset her would have subdued many minds into inaction; she only loved more widely and worked more strenuously. Her courage was as indomitable as her kindness was unwearied.

* * *

Three weeks before her death I was fortunate enough to see her; she had outwearied herself by a long journey for a literary purpose, and was far from being well or strong, but we little guessed that this meeting was our last. Her cheeks, beneath her white hair, were round, her eyes bright, her conversation humorous as ever, with a little point of *malice*, in the French sense. She had her antipathies, she had none of the dulness of the universally tolerant. In this, no doubt, she was less of a saint than her patron, St. Margaret of Scotland. There had been friendly little wrangles between us, probably on the old Blackwood heroes, for she was as loyal to 'Ebony' as John Knox would fain have been to Bothwell. In the best of senses Mrs. Oliphant was very Scottish, which implies a loyalty as staunch as that of her illustrious clansmen, if not kinsmen, the Oliphants of Gask. Indeed, she was compact of all good qualities, including a tender affection for young people, not necessarily for the works of all young authors. She was undeniably 'old-fashioned,' not always opening her heart to novelties. She outlived her contemporaries; for her St. Andrews had become a place of mournful memories, haunted by shadows of friends, Tullochs, Ferriers, Blackwoods at Strathtyrum, my own kith and kin, and, above all, by the faces of her sons. We are all outliving our contemporaries, but Mrs. Oliphant's juniors, who knew her, admired her and cherished her no less than they who shared the brighter days of her youth and her maturity.

* * *

Nobody ever met Death with a serener faith and a happier security. No man goes more gladly home than she to the 'gentle, and dear, and desired embraces of the earth,' as Rabelais writes. She has entered into the rest for which she longed, and left to us the peaceful and mellow light of her example. Faiths change, ideas alter, but that faith is justified of itself which brings forth characters like Mrs. Oliphant.

* * *

Odes are 'in,' and what poet will be so mean as to hold his hand, in spite of the heat of the weather? I began a loyal one.

*Twice a hundred years ago, and nine,
Drooped the Roses of the Royal line.
Flushed with Hope, and fragrant with the dew,
Now the Roses, Rupert, bud for you.*

But the heat of the weather interfered, and it went no further. However I really cannot lag behind the Laureate, Mr. Austin Dobson, Mr. Barry Pain, Sir Lewis Morris, and other tuneful gentlemen. Scorning the hackneyed topics, my muse set out to welcome our brethren of brotherly love beyond the sea, the gallant Philadelphians. 'Among the faithless'—to cricket—'faithful only they,' in America. Men who have taken tea with Sussex, and bowled the princely descendant of a hundred Jams for a cypher, deserve a regular Pindaric ode, full of legend and mythology, and not easy to construe. Here is a bit of it, as much as the heat of the weather will allow.

* * *

ODE TO THE PHILADELPHIANS.

Sons of the mighty Quaker,¹ man of men,
 Who, when the recreant Church had turned her coat,
 Ousting that King² who first made all faiths free,
 Stood for the King and Freedom, William Penn,
 Welcome you are—and I would have men note
 That your most subtle bowler, even He
 Who sent the Indian Prince³ back with a duck
 (I know not if by skill, or heavenly luck),
 Bears the great name of King⁴—welcome are ye!

Not yours the art of *Pitcher*, or of *Base*,
 Not yours a game we do not understand.
 Your fields like true-born Englishmen you place;
 You *pitch* not, but bowl British overhand!

Oh Philadelphians! the South Saxons yield,
 Even with Ranjitsinhji, to your might.
 May you make all Columbia one field,
 Where men may stop the yorker, and may smite
 The wan half-volley to the conscious ropes!
 Such, sons of Pennsylvania, are our hopes;
 These most on you depend!
 Keep up your glorious end,

¹ 'Quaker,' Mr. William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania.

² 'King,' that is, James II.

³ 'Indian Prince,' K. S. Ranjitsinhji.

⁴ Mr. King, who bowled K. S. B.

Till Baseball droops her shattered wings, and all
 Columbia, handling the heroic ball,
 Plays that great Island of the Southern Cross,
 Or (if she win the toss
 On a sound wicket) makes our England fall!

Then, bound once more in bands of brotherhood,
 That ne'er should have been broken, you and we,
 English of East and West, by land and sea,
 One banner shall unfold,
 The shining standard of the M.C.C.
 Blazoned in red and gold,
 In *gules* and *or*.
 On every conquered and instructed shore,
 The oriflamme of Cricket, once unfurled,
 Shall dominate the world.

* . *

Perhaps nobody would care to read much more of an Ode, but, on proper encouragement by subscribers, more can easily be written. An Ode is not like other poems; it is still more difficult to read, but much easier to write, as rhymes can come in anywhere, and no kind of connection of ideas is demanded. Yet, granting all this, the Laureate is a most underpaid man, unless the sherry is of unusual excellence.

* . *

Never was anything so ill managed as the *Times's* Ghost Hunt. The gentleman who wrote the vast letter 'On the Trail of a Ghost' jumped in, with his own version, before anybody knew (does any one know now?) whether the Psychical people accepted the evidence as proof even of any events at all out of the common. Prudently anonymous himself, he clamoured for scientific publicity, as if it were usual for Science to give such information. Any reader of manuals of Psychology, Mr. Sully's, Mr. William James's, or what you please, knows that 'cases' are often given without names of persons or places. Who was 'Mrs. A.,' whose case is an old stock instance? Nobody knows. Who was the German handmaiden that spoke Hebrew, Greek, and Latin in a delirium, having unconsciously learned them, from the recitations of a clerical pundit? Where did she live, and when? Science, which eternally cites her, does not know. Mr. Sully, in

his work on 'Illusions,' gives a story of a mediæval figure seen by various people in a certain room, and he explains the affair in his own manner. Where is the house, and who were the seers? I happen to know one of them, but Mr. Sully gives no names or places, quite properly. Dozens of country houses, and houses in towns, have their legends. The owners are often proud of them, but it does not follow that they should be published without permission. The *Times* correspondent actually published his version of private conversations, at one of which, at least, he was not even present. This is not evidence. I know nothing, personally, of untoward sounds, such as would excite a moment's notice elsewhere, in the mansion of which so much has been written. But if one's bedroom echoes with buzzings and bangings, which one attributes to the drawing of water in a distant wing, it is easy to have water drawn there, to listen, and see whether the alleged cause produces the effect. Even this elementary experiment does not seem to have been made by the correspondent of the *Times*. The letter-writers differ as to whether any legends were current before last autumn, when some of a party of shooting tenants and of their guests certainly described themselves as gravely incommoded. It is truly very odd if the owners can live peacefully in a peaceful house, while tenants abandon it and find it distressingly noisy. The last inference one would draw is an inference that the deuce is in it. The bold butler, who signs his name like a man, tells a tale sufficiently startling, but it is evident that such disturbances as he describes must have been novelties, however caused. Nobody would have endured them long. Therefore they were new.

* * *

This hits the hypothesis of earthquakes, 'seismic disturbances,' rather hard. Earthquakes which move beds about are not common, even near Comrie, nor is it likely that earthquakes should set in just when a house is let: though this, of course, is a possible coincidence. On the other hand, the sounds described almost exactly correspond, in many cases, to those which drove Lord St. Vincent, then Captain Jarvis, and his sister, Mrs. Ricketts, out of the old house at Hinton Ampner, about 1771. Again, they answer as closely to the earthquake noises described by Professor Milne. But I presume that everybody, not stone-deaf, hears earthquake noises. Now the sounds vouched for by the bold butler and others, and by Lord St. Vincent, at Hinton,

were *not* equally heard by all : Lord St. Vincent never heard of them till his sister reluctantly complained of them. Then, as he attests, he heard them both by day and night, and with all his endeavours could not account for them. Offers of a reward of 100*l.* produced no results, and 100*l.* was a good deal of money in Hampshire in 1771-72. Seismic sounds would cover 'the Murmur' complained of by Mrs. Ricketts, but would scarcely cover the voices. Yet the seismic explanation explains so much that it would be most interesting to know whether the district near Alresford is really subject to rudimentary shocks of earthquake. The old house was pulled down soon after Mrs. Ricketts was obliged to leave it. Another family held out for a year ; then the mansion was destroyed. The servants saw appearances of men and women ; Mrs. Ricketts and Lord St. Vincent saw nothing of the kind, nor did the children, who were unconscious of any perturbations. Now children are usually as sensitive as my kitten, the Womp, who was terribly alarmed by thunder lately. Hence, and from countless other cases, one might tentatively infer that the noises of which some people have complained are no more real than the appearances which one person sees, and another, who is present, does not see ; no more real than the snakes and rats of delirium tremens. But, if this be so, then such illusions of eyes and ears may be 'catching,' like mumps, and, if that be true, the fact is of scientific interest. However, no facts can be ascertained, facts of earthquake, or practical joking, or infectious illusions, when everything is mixed up with personalities and prejudices, and private interests, and the gossip of the servants' hall, in the turbid stream of newspaper correspondence. The public will never understand that it is one thing to hunt for 'ghosts,' and quite another to try to ascertain (1) whether certain phenomena really exist, (2) whether their natural causes can be discovered. Even if they cannot, a 'ghost' is the very last cause which any person of sound mind would invoke. But the prejudice in favour of or against 'ghosts' will eternally be dragged in, darkening counsel, and interfering alike with seismology and psychology.

* * *

In all these affairs everybody argues that everybody else is an Idiot. A., B., and C. hear a noise ; D. and E. and F. do not. That, if they knew it, is precisely the point of interest. Let us have the affirmative evidence of A., B., and C. and the negative

evidence of D., E., and F. But A., B., and C. say D., E., and F. are deaf, while D., E., and F. say that A., B., and C. are liars, superstitious asses, that noise there was none, that A., B., and C. made the noise, that the noise was caused by water pipes, by earthquakes, by schoolboys, and so forth. And all this has been going on as long as history holds records. It is encouraging!

* * *

A lady in a 'Jubilee appeal' asks for HELP to accomplish her life-long desire, the publication of a defence of an 'Eminent Scottish Jacobite.' Who is the gentleman, and who attacked his character? Is it Murray of Broughton? is it Lovat? is it Archy Cameron? I can clear that gentleman's character, I think, after prolonged investigations. Archy did *not* 'snaffle' 6,000*l.*, and invest it in business. That was a fable of Young Glengarry's. The Clan may be quite easy in their minds about the brave and amiable Doctor, whom Dr. Johnson so warmly defended. Hogarth and Richardson were defending George II. for executing Archy, which, to be sure, was very defensible, *pour encourager les autres*. While Hogarth was talking he perceived a person standing at a window in the room, shaking his head, and rolling himself about in a strange, ridiculous manner. He concluded that was an idiot, whom his relations had put under the care of Mr. Richardson, as a very good man.' But he was not an 'idiot;' he was Samuel Johnson, who began an invective against George II. 'Hogarth looked at him with astonishment, and actually imagined that the idiot had been at the moment inspired.' Archy, as Bozzy says, was 'a truly honest man,' and, if the Lady means to defend *him*, she is right. Johnson, and Hogarth, and Richardson were all equally in the dark.

* * *

Long ago, in *Macmillan's Magazine* (November 1880), Mrs. Edwards published an article called 'The Mystery of the Pezazi.' She told how her bungalow, in Ceylon, was perturbed by the sound of a Midnight Axe, felling trees in the forest. 'Blow after blow resounded, as of the axe descending upon the tree, followed by the crash of the fallen timber.' No solution of the mystery of the sounds could be discovered; the natives attributed them to a Pezazi, or goblin. This seemed isolated, till I found exactly the same facts reported by Sahagun among the Aztecs, immediately after the Conquest by Cortes. The Aztecs call it *yqualtepuztli*,

'night-copper,' that is, Midnight Axe. Mr. Leslie Stephen then pointed out to me that De Quincey's brother, Pink, had been appalled by the same noise in the Galapagos Islands (*Autobiographical Sketches*, 'My Brother'). The thing occurs in Santorin, and here is one from Madagascar. I suppress the name and address of the missionary who kindly sends the facts, as I have not received his permission to publish them. But I have no doubt that he would, if asked, give permission. Here is his letter:—

'May 20, 1897.

'DEAR SIR,—It has often been in my mind to write to you on a matter to which you once directed attention in the columns of the *Nineteenth Century*. I refer to what you call, if I remember rightly, the "Mysterious Nocturnal Axe." As you wrote that article many years ago it is quite possible that you have long since found an adequate solution to what still puzzles myself and others. Briefly, then, I came here from — in June 1895. The Mission House is built in a clearing in the belt of forest running along the coast, and quite close to the beach. It stands alone and at some distance from the other mission buildings in the same large, unenclosed compound. We lie quite outside the native village, and there is not a single hut for miles beyond in the direction of the forest. There is a Betsimisarakaka cemetery, strongly palisaded or stockaded, about 100 yards to the north of my bedroom. Soon after we came here we were frequently disturbed, late into the night and long after retiring, by distinct sounds of trees being felled in the near neighbourhood of our bedroom. Even a town-bred person would not be likely to mistake the sound; and I, who once lived in the Backwoods, am even less liable to be mistaken. The axe, as it bites into a tree, has an echo peculiar to itself. We sought an explanation in ordinary phenomena, and made inquiries, but to no purpose. I suggested, for want of better, these, among others: 1. A belated woodcutter. There was no evidence of his work in the vicinity, and the supposition involved an act entirely at variance with native customs. 2. Cattle astray and rubbing their horns against the dry wood fences in vogue at —. *Per contra* there are no such fences nearer than the aforesaid native village.

'My predecessor, the Rev. —, an Oxford man, who had not yet left for England, could not help me much. He threw out the suggestion that the noise was made by a large

nocturnal woodpecker, as yet unknown to science. This seemed but a tame and impotent conclusion at which to arrive. The natives are broken reeds to lean on in such matters. They are just as many Gallios in anything requiring thought and investigation. Shortly after, when ransacking the mission premises for something to read, we lighted on a lot of old magazines, and came upon your article on the very subject that had exercised our minds. Utterly incredulous as to "spooks," though keeping an open mind, I am sure that some very commonplace explanation will one day offer. Tropical nights and strange surroundings are great mystery-makers, and echo is as Puck-like as ever. Still I am no nearer understanding this "nocturnal axe." But it is only a question of time. I may mention that it is now some time since we heard it. Whilst not quite positive, I think the sound ceased about the time I cut down the thicket to the north of my house, at the suggestion of a French officer, in the first days of the occupation, in order to allow of volley-firing in case of attack from the revolting tribes. Remains the cemetery, in which only a special class of the Betsimisaraka may be buried. There may be some secret rites performed there; that is a bare possibility for which I have no authority whatsoever. This is a very belated communication, but I felt some diffidence in writing to you. If I can solve the matter during my residence here I will do so.

'I remain very faithfully yours.'

My correspondent may be right, and a very ordinary explanation may be found. But it will have to cover the cases of Mexico, Ceylon, Madagascar, and the Galapagos Islands at least. If the noise is attributed to a bird, he must be indigenous to all four districts. My correspondent disposes of the other solutions which have been suggested, and the Aztec superstition in Sahagun is one which I have not found a trace of elsewhere. The passage is translated in my *Custom and Myth*, pp. 15-18. There is just a trace of the phenomenon in Australia. A native, asked how spirits (*Brewin*) manifest themselves, took up a book and hammered with the edges of it on a table. But I never heard of a white man who had experience of the Midnight Axe in Australia. Evidence from travellers will be welcome, for we may at last discover the real cause of the Midnight Axe. I do not know it in European folk lore.

* * *

On another point, the practice of Walking the Fire, a correspondent kindly sends me a letter from Trinidad. The people who walk the fire there anoint their feet with the juice of a plant, which causes profuse perspiration, and, in itself, resists heat, as the writer has tested by holding it over a flame on a plate of tin. This would scarcely meet the case of Fiji, for example, where dry fern fillets on the feet of the performers do not catch fire, nor is the plant (Latin name unknown) as widely diffused as the ritual. However I give the information as apparently sound and authentic. Other methods may be used in other places.

* * *

The following fables are from the pen of a fabulist of seven.

THE DAISY AND THE POPY.

A Daisy is a pretty flower, so modest and so mild. Saw a Popy in a temper, and wondered why. Said the Popy—

‘Tis a shame that Man should be so cruel; ’tis a shame!’

‘May I ask what is the mater, my pretty friend?’ said the Daisy.

‘Yes,’ said she.

‘Well, what?’

‘The reapers have come to cut down the corn, and where shall I go?’

‘Oh,’ said the Daisy, ‘why did you not choose a spot like this?’

‘Oh,’ said the Popy, ‘I must be out in the world, you no!’

MORAL.

Do not be worldly.

MOLLY'S HAIR.

Molly was not so very pretty, every one said, but the one thing about her was her hair; but I am afraid she was very proud of it, so much so that if her mother asked her to do anything she would not, because she was afraid it would spoil her hair.

One day she went to the fire to warm her hands, and fell in, burnt all her lovely hair off; it never was half so nice again.

MORAL.

Proud people often get their sorrows by being so.

* * *

These fables are not faultless. The modest Daisy gets eaten by cows, and cut down by scythes as much as the worldly Popy. And Molly came to her sorrows not by being proud, but by warming her hands. However Molly's hair really is very pretty, and no *other* little girls need send in any more fables, for they will not be printed, as nobody knows whether they are pretty or not. And this is a fable for literary ladies, a horribly immoral fable.

A. LANG.

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